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LOUISA,

OR THE

COTTAGE ON THE MOOR.

BY ELIZABETH HELME.

"——— Ye good distress'd!
Ye noble few! who here unbending stand
Beneath life's pressure, yet bear up awhile—
And what your bounded view, which only saw
A little part, deem'd evil, is no more!
The storms of wintry time will quickly pass,
And one unbounded spring encircle all."

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PREFACE.

THOUGH introductory matter, at the first view, may appear very simple, yet an intelligent reader will readily admit the necessity of it: indeed, from its very general use in the world, we may term it highly essential. To prove this figuratively, we will suppose a timid visitor making a first appearance amidst a group of fashionable belles and beaux, who, in spite of every modest external, loudly join in censuring the poor stranger, because he or she happen to fall under the unlucky predicament of being one, that—nobody knows. An admired

author says: "A composition that enters the world, with a view of improving or amusing it, has a claim to our utmost indulgence, even though it fail of the effect intended." More might be said on the subject; but if we believe the asseverations of some eminent publishers, Essay-writing is totally out of fashion; character, or rather *caricatura*, is now the rage. For my own part, I am not fashionable enough to enjoy the *outré* part of the creation; therefore shall content myself with exposing vice only:—as for harmless absurdity, it should ever rest in good-nature's lap.

I doubt not but there are, among the number of those who may cast a glance on my rural building, many who prefer a more exalted and dignified structure: need such to be told, cottages were prior to palaces?—that the beauty and regula-

rity of architecture were not the work of a day? This considered, candid criticism will relax a little of its severity in favor of a female candidate, whose errors, I trust, are those of the head, not the heart. Men of might! be merciful; let not the torrent of your disapprobation sweep away my humble dwelling; nor expose, with a too harsh severity, the imperfections of my fabric to eyes less discerning than your own.

To my fair readers, I need say little; virtue and humanity are the natural growth of their bosoms: conscious that neither of these heavenly attributes will receive the least check from my Louisa, I doubt not their candor; and if my heroine merit one tear of sensibility, I shall be amply satisfied.

It remains now only to say, that, as natural fiction, judiciously blended with

diversity, is the most agreeable characteristic of novel-writing, that relation must be doubly pleasing, which boasts of outlines founded on truth, and can point to living examples of suffering virtue, in the end meeting their due reward.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I. A Wanderer. . . . . *page* 1
——— II. Friendship. 6
——— III. A melancholy Narrative begun. 10
——— IV. Continued. 17
——— V. Continued 23
——— VI. Continued. 36
——— VII. Narrative concluded. 47
——— VIII. Louisa's Story begun. 56
——— IX. Continued. 63
——— X. Continued 75
——— XI. Continued. 84
——— XII. Continued. 92
——— XIII. Louisa Story's concluded . . . 103
——— XIV. A Letter and a Separation. . . 112
——— XV. A Meeting. 118
——— XVI. A friendly Letter. 129

CHAPTER XVII. A Challenge. . . . . *page* 138
——— XVIII. A Duel. 145
——— XIX. An unexpected Event. 153
——— XX. A Visit. 162
——— XXI. Mr. Belmont's Narrative. . . 167
——— XXII. Villany. 178
——— XXIII. Suicide. 191
——— XXIV. Conclusion 198

LOUISA,

OR THE

COTTAGE ON THE MOOR.

CHAPTER I.

A WANDERER.

Night, sable goddess, from her ebon throne,
In rayless majesty, now stretches forth
Her leaden sceptre o'er a slumb'ring world:
Silence, how dead! and darkness how profound!
Nor eye, nor list'ning ear, an object finds:
Creation sleeps;—'tis as the general pulse
Of life stood still, and nature made a pause—
An awful pause, prophetic of her end!

YOUNG'S NIGHT THOUGHTS.

AT the foot of a high hill, on a large tract of barren land, known by the name of Stanmore, about seven miles from Kendal, in the county of Westmorland, stood a small cot, whose thatched roof tempted not the midnight robber; nor yet whose penurious aspect seemed to refuse, in this dreary spot, comfort to the distressed traveller.

On a frosty night, the latter end of December (when the mild radiance of the moon, to a mind at ease, might have made even this rough scene delightful), the inhabitants of the cottage were disturbed by a loud knocking, which was answered by a female voice, who, from a window in the upper story, demanded the reason of this late alarm! Accents which at once bespoke pity, and claimed from the humanised mind immediate succour, reached the ear of the interrogator to the following purport:—"Alas! if you refuse me entrance, here must I perish; I have wandered amidst these wilds, till cold has almost deprived me of sensation." The stranger ceased; — the hospitable wicket opened wide, and discovered to the pitying portress a female sinking with fatigue: the succouring arm of Mary (for so was the attendant of the cottage named) was immediately held out.—"Fear not, Madam," said she, "lean on me; I will conduct you to my mistress, who will gladly afford every assistance in her power." With feeble step and slow, the benighted stranger reached the apartment of the mistress of this humble mansion, who rose to receive and welcome her unexpected guest; then turning to Mary, ordered her to bring some warm wine, and mend the half-extinguished fire. Mary had a heart that needed no prompting to tenderness and humanity; her mistress was, therefore, immediately obeyed.

When the stranger had taken some refreshment, and vital warmth diffused itself on her limbs, she returned such thanks as convinced Mrs. Rivers, the mistress of the cottage, that her prepossessions in favor of her new guest were not ill founded. The ladies now had leisure to examine each other, though not with the supercilious eye of envy with which the modern *belle* observes her competitor in dress and fashion: here every fresh glance discovered a new grace, or additional virtue; such is the power of sympathy on uncorrupted minds. The stranger found her entertainer possessed of beauty, though at the age of thirty-six; nor was it lessened by the plain mourning habit she wore: native dignity shone conspicuous, though woe had strongly marked her lovely features with his iron traits. The fair wanderer, (who was named Louisa) appeared to Mrs. Rivers about seventeen; she was tall and elegantly formed; her complexion of the most transparent fairness; her lovely downcast blue eyes seemed sureties that innocence and virtue dwelt within. The pale blush of her cheek was admirably contrasted by the vermilion of her lips, which opened on rows of pearl; bright auburn locks, whose ringlets needed not the assistance of art, fell negligently on her snowy neck: in fine, she was loveliness itself, without the aid of ornament.

For some moments, did the humane Mrs. Rivers survey the lovely distressed in silent sorrow; her surcharged heart overflowing in pearly drops, to think so delicate a form should be exposed to the dangers of the night and inclemency of the season; curiosity, though in general predominant in a female breast, was here absorbed by gentle pity. This tender sensation was however changed into a sudden start and look of horror, on perceiving several spots of blood on the fair stranger's habit; and her inquiring eye seemed to demand explanation of what she almost dreaded to hear!—Mrs. Rivers's strong emotion was not unobserved by Louisa, who, casting her eye downward, perceived the cause: "You have seen, Madam," said she, "what till this moment, was unknown to myself; think not unfavorably of me, if I appear confused; it is not from conscious guilt, but the recollection of dangers which I have this night escaped; this blood was shed in a moment of desperation, to preserve a wretched girl her only possession." "Alas!" returned Mrs. Rivers, "can any thing authorise a deed so shocking to humanity?"—— "Yes, Madam," replied Louisa, "the defence of innocence and virtue; but for that wound, which, however, I hope is slight, I had been deprived of both. If I have not already too far trespassed on your goodness, I will relate the

cause of my appearing before you in this strange situation, and at so late an hour."

The innocence of Louisa's manner, and readiness to satisfy any doubt, pleaded strongly with Mrs. Rivers, in whose bosom she had a powerful advocate from the first moment of their meeting. "Not to-night," said that lady; "your exhausted strength and spirits require rest. If you can spare a little time from happier connexions, I shall be much pleased with your company at the cottage". Louisa raised her eyes to heaven, deeply sighed, bowed her thanks, and retired with Mary, who waited to light her to her chamber.

CHAPTER II.

FRIENDSHIP.

Tir'd Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep!
He, like the world, his ready visit pays
Where fortune smiles; the wretched he forsakes,
Swift on his downy pinion flies from woe,
And lights on lids unsully'd with a tear!

YOUNG'S NIGHT THOUGHTS.

ON Mary's return, she found her mistress lost in thought, which she interrupted by exclaiming, "Bless me, Madam, do you recollect any one like this young lady?" "No," returned Mrs. Rivers. "Then, Madam," replied Mary, "you must have forgot yourself, when about her age, for the former part of your life is renewed in her every look and motion." Mary awakened a painful sensation, and recalled affliction gave its accustomed tribute—a tear. "Let us hope, Mary," said the good lady, "a happier fortune than mine awaits her, whatever may be the resemblance of our persons."

Mary, though in a station of life inferior to Mrs. Rivers, had a heart replete with goodness, and sincerely accorded with that lady in her

well-wishes to the fair stranger, whom they did not fail to remember in their orisons to that Power, who sometimes, for his own wise purposes, may chastise, but is never deaf to the prayer of the virtuous.

And now, for a few hours, the inhabitants of this lonely cot were lost in silence, though sleep refused its soft dominion over Mrs. Rivers and her fair guest: the former reflected with amazement on the strangeness of her meeting with so lovely a girl, and, if for a moment the idea withdrew itself, a heavy sigh from the latter, from whom she was only separated by a slight partition, again gave it fresh strength. Towards morning, their woe-worn souls forgot their sorrows in gentle slumbers; but soon Louisa waked, and fearing she might keep her hospitable entertainer waiting, hastily rose and went down to the apartment she was in the night before. Mrs. Rivers having not yet made her appearance, she had an opportunity of observing the cottage, which the confusion of her thoughts the night before prevented. It was plain, and the only thing that could make it superior to any other, was neatness; a small harpsichord, two shelves of books, containing some of the best theological and poetic works extant. All further examination was stopped by the entrance of Mrs. Rivers, who again welcomed and saluted her fair visitor. Louisa now offered

to fulfil her last night's promise, and give her kind entertainer some account of herself. "You promised me, last night, your attention, Madam," said she; "may I now intrude?" — "I had rather," returned Mrs. Rivers, "that a few days should calm that perturbation of spirits, which at present so visibly disturbs you; a recital of what is so lately past, will but renew your sorrows; in the mean time, be assured I believe you innocent of ill, nor would I for the world think the contrary. If you can prefer this solitude to the gaiety of the world, which at your age must have charms, you are welcome: Nay, no thanks" for Louisa attempted to speak, "I am the obliged. I find myself attached to you by a power, which I neither strive or wish to withstand." Louisa's breast was too full for utterance; tears usurped the place of words; which the amiable Mrs. Rivers perceiving, changed the subject, by telling her fair guest it was the hour appropriated for morning devotion. "We have not," continued she, "a church nearer than seven miles; for my own part, I do not think prayer less acceptable to the Almighty, though ascending from a cottage." After about an hour passed in supplication, Mary retired to the call of industry; and Mrs. Rivers to furnish a change of linen for Louisa, who cleared her habit of those sanguinary drops with which it was spotted.

The remainder of the day was spent in conversation; and friendship, swift as the moments flew, increased in their sympathising bosoms: but though Louisa felt its soothing power, she could not restrain the rising tear; her agitation was considerably increased, when the little clock on the table struck six: "Exactly at this time," said she, "last night, I began my weary walk—after such a scene—the wound I gave—Heaven pardon me—'twas designed for my own bosom—but thy all-seeing eye directed my trembling hand, and fixed it in his vicious arm!" Recollection could no longer sustain the painful idea — she ceased and fainted. Mrs. Rivers flew to her assistance; and with the aid of Mary, who was almost as much attached to her as her mistress, she soon recovered, and apologised to her benefactress, who, though grieved at her situation, was not displeased to hear the wound spoken of was the arm, from thence concluding it not dangerous; and though she much wished to hear the whole of this mysterious relation, yet the goodness of her own heart would not permit that of Louisa's to be wounded by the recital of misfortunes, whose impressions were so freshly engraven on it.

CHAPTER III.

A MELANCHOLY NARRATIVE BEGUN.

—How beautiful is death, when earn'd by virtue!
———What pity is it
That we can die but once to serve our country!
ADDISON'S CATO.

WHEN Louisa's tears had a little subsided, and pensive calmness had again taken possession of her bosom, Mrs. Rivers, to divert her thoughts from a recollection of past ills, addressed her in the following manner: "My dear Louisa, excuse my calling you so, friendship deals not in compliment, I will inform you how I came to take up my residence in this desolate uninhabited spot. You, I trust, have many happy hours to come; my misfortunes are beyond the reach of fate! here have I passed these last fifteen years, and here do I mean to finish my weary pilgrimage!"—A half-smothered sigh now heaved the bosom of the gentle narrator, on recounting events still painful, though long past; while the soft radiance of Louisa's eye, gave the tribute of a commiserating tear to sorrows which for a while

suspended the recollection of her own. A pause of a few moments ensued, which was interrupted by Mrs. Rivers desiring Mary to set a glass of water before her; this done, that lady recounted her story as follows:

"My father was the only son of a gentleman of small fortune, who had a place in one of the public offices, which brought him about four hundred pounds a year. By living up to the full of what he possessed, he had it only in his power to procure a pair of colors for his son; who, however, did not remain in that state long; for bravely distinguishing himself, and officers of higher rank having lost their lives in the service of their country, he soon obtained a company. The regiment being much disabled, was ordered home, where, after remaining two years, he closed his only parent's eyes, his mother expiring in giving him birth. Being left without friends or relatives, he wished sincerely to be recalled to Flanders; which, in a little time, happened. Soon after his arrival in that country, he married the daughter of an officer lately dead, who had two thousand pounds in the British funds. I was born in about a year after this marriage; and the year following, my father was again ordered to England, to the great joy of my mother: in short, not to tire you, we returned home, and passed five years of inexpressible

your heart with evils that may never happen, but with your usual serenity expel the gloom your tears have spread on my spirits.'

"Alas!—my mother's forebodings were too true! When my father, after embracing, parted with her in the morning, she remained in a state almost of insensibility, until the entrance of a soldier shook her from her reverie: he informed her, with respect, and as much tenderness as his time would allow, that his captain had received a wound; that fearful of alarming her in that state, he had sent this message in some measure to prepare her for the shock.—'They have killed him, then!' said she, with a look that spoke her inward horror.—'No, Madam, he is not dead; his lamenting soldiers are now bearing him home.' Scarcely had he pronounced it, ere they entered with my father in their arms, who had received a musket shot in his breast. My unhappy mother remained rivetted to the spot, her eyes raised to heaven, and lost in agony unutterable. My father, holding out his hand, said,—'My dear Emily, why will you think so deeply? I have only paid the debt every man owes to God and his country! I am spared to breathe my last sigh in thy arms, to bless thee and our little one before I quit this for a happier state! Had I expired without the satisfaction of bidding thee adieu, grief had then been more just.'—'Alas!' returned

my mother, 'why do you attempt to speak comfort to a wretch bereaved of every hope?'—'Again, let me intreat you,' said he, 'not to waste the little time allotted me in unavailing sorrow: would you deprive our dear child of the only support and guardian of her youth? for now, Emily, you are her all.'—The entrance of the surgeon prevented his saying more; who, after desiring my mother's absence, examined the wound, which he pronounced mortal. My father calmly answered, 'I feel not for myself; I knew it was fatal, the moment I received it; but for that amiable woman who has just left us, let me intreat your tenderest care; persuade her to return to England as soon as possible. Alas! she has no one here to speak comfort in her affliction; to you, Sir, I apply, having proof of your humanity by the attention you paid a slight wound I received the first engagement I ever was in. Let me intreat you to wear this ring (taking one of value from his finger) as a memorial of my friendship.' The surgeon received the ring, and promised to fulfil his request. My mother now entered, silent and sad; the surgeon offered to withdraw. 'Do not go,' said my father, 'I feel a little faint; Emily, give me your hand; for heaven's sake take comfort!' Nature almost exhausted, he fainted—my mother, imagining him dead, cast her despairing eyes first on him, then to heaven, and fell senseless by his

side; the surgeon was obliged to call assistance, as both remained deprived of sense and motion. My father first revived; and my unhappy mother, by the use of drops, was soon restored to the painful scene before her.

'Now, my dear Emily', said this affectionate husband, 'let me conjure you no longer to detain, by your violent emotion, my soul in this painful tenement, but kneel and join with me in intreating protection for you, and pardon for my offences from that Power whose mercy I doubt not.' She dropped on her trembling knees; my father seemed to pray for about a quarter of an hour, then feebly pressing my mother's hand, faintly pronounced —' Almighty God, protect her!'— bowed his head upon her breast, and expired."

CHAPTER IV.

NARRATIVE CONTINUED.

———The wintry blast of Death
Kills not the buds of Virtue! No, they spread
Beneath the heavenly beam of brighter suns,
Thro' endless ages, into higher powers!
THOMSON'S SEASONS.

Mrs. Rivers ceased, and dropped a filial tear: Louisa's long restrained sympathising sorrow burst forth. After a pause of a few minutes, the eldest of the ladies rose: "I had this account, my dear Louisa," said she, "from Mr. Bennet, the surgeon who attended my father: but we will talk no more on these mournful subjects to-night; to-morrow we will renew them; it is now almost supper time: the interval we will spend in music." She sat down to the harpsichord, and soon convinced her guest, though now hid under a thatched roof, she had harmony of voice and execution of finger that would have graced a drawing room.

When the hymn was finished, Louisa agreeably surprised her, by playing in her turn, attended by a voice whose sweetness might have taught melody to the soft breathings of the flute.

Mary now entered with their supper, which consisted of vegetables and eggs. Mrs. Rivers apologised to her guest, by informing her the butcher visited them only weekly, at which time they took provisions for the space till his return: "as to other things, Mary visits Kendal three or four times a year; our bread is baked at home; and our little garden, by the industry of an old man who sometimes attends, supplies us with a great deal. When I first retired here, Mary bought a quantity of fowls; but I grew so attached to my feathered companions, that I would not by any means have them hurt: they well repay our kindness; we have plenty of eggs, which is of material service to us."

The supper finished, our gentle cottagers retired to rest; and balmy sleep, kinder than the night before, soon overcame their woes in airy visions of ideal happiness.

Soon as the morning gave light, which was not till the hour of seven, Louisa rose, and, after intreating the guidance of that Power whom neither prosperity nor adversity could make her forget, descended to the parlour; from the window of which she passed her time, till Mrs. Rivers joined her, in strewing crumbs to numberless birds, which the bitterness of the weather forces to draw nigh to the habitation of inhuman man, who, regardless of the mercy that should accom-

pany the image of his Creator, as they chirping intreat his favor, barbarously shoots, and eases their wants by laying them breathless on the frozen ground.

Others, unmindful of the joys of plenty, a gentle consort, and playful children, who by their cherub smiles intreat their stay, hastily rise ere the day begins to dawn, and, galloping over hedge and ditch, pursue, with unwearied ardor, —a trembling hare, who flies even at the rustling of the leaves. Unmanly task! if you must delight in such pleasures, seek not a timid foe, from conquering whom no honor can result. — Such were the meditations of Louisa's gentle breast, until joined by her kind entertainer; breakfast was then introduced, after which the day was spent by our new acquainted friends much as the preceding one. Towards evening, Mrs. Rivers thus continued her narrative.

"For a fortnight after my father's death, my unhappy mother remained insensible; in which state her woes had certainly concluded, had not the unwearied care and attention of Mr. Bennet, who spared no means that art or friendship could devise to save her life, restored her senses to a painful tranquillity.

"Finding her one day more composed than usual, he informed her of my father's desire that she should return to England as soon as possible:

and virtuous husband.' Stranger to disguise, I made but this objection: 'Mr. Rivers will look with horror on one that he will deem has seduced his nephew.' 'That must be my care,' said she;—'heaven forbid I should make use of the power allotted me in any other cause than that of virtue, especially against my husband. You were too young, Maria, to be acquainted with my affairs; but must now know, my marriage with Mr. Rivers was at the intercession of an uncle, who was my guardian, and a bachelor: on my bridal day he paid down my paternal fortune of twenty thousand pounds, with an addition of ten more, which he presented me. —Alas! I fear Mr. Rivers's principal view was money. I know not how, but by some means my relation became acquainted with some youthful foibles of Mr. Rivers's; and the old gentleman, dying soon after, left me near as much as I first received, together with a landed estate and manor-house in Kent, to the value of two thousand pounds a year; tying the estate so strongly to me, that no one else can receive the rents, and totally at death to bequeath to whom I please. The gross sum I presented to Mr. Rivers; the yearly income I have used to assist the friendless, Mr. Rivers having no occasion for it, his fortune trebling that. Now, my dear girl, I have pointed out the means by which I can assist you; nor

will Mr. Rivers openly avow displeasure at what I shall authorise. You will say I have entered hastily into this matter; — spare me, Maria, spare me the reason; I have promised to protect your innocence, nor can I securely do it any other way.' So saying she hastily rose, the tear glittering in her eye, and retired."

CHAPTER VI.

NARRATIVE CONTINUED.

But happy they! the happiest of their kind,
Whom gentler stars unite; and, in one fate,
Their hearts, their fortunes, and their beings blend.
THOMSON'S SEASONS.

"AFTER her departure, I sat pondering on her last mysterious words, for such they seemed to me." 'My innocence in danger! cried I; impossible!—I scarcely am acquainted with any man but Mr. Rivers and Henry; the latter she mentioned as virtuous, and shall I dare suspect the former? Her words were dark; yet, without some hidden reason, would she ever consent to a clandestine proceeding, and risk displeasing a husband, whose every desire seems law?' I then tried to recollect each word he uttered the evening before, which my confusion at that time prevented: the recollection rather confirmed than removed my doubts.—Alas! he demanded more than reverence and esteem, I think he mentioned love:—merciful heaven! am I here to strew discontent; when I should think my life too poor a sacrifice for Mrs. Rivers's peace?

My disagreeable reverie was here interrupted by Mary, who informed me, Mrs. Rivers desired my company in the drawing-room, adding — 'and indeed, Miss, there is the most pleasing looking man with her I ever saw: when I went in, Mrs. Rivers told him of my living with your mamma, and that I was much attached to you: he answered, he was sure then I was a good girl, and took my hand; I was so ashamed, that I scarce received my message, but hastened to you.'

"I composed my features as well as possible, that they might not be an index of the contending passions that dwelt within, and obeyed my summons to the drawing-room; where I was prepossessed, like Mary, in favor of the stranger, who was a likely man, seemingly about the age of thirty-eight. He rose at my entrance.—'Ah! madam,' said he, 'it is, indeed, the daughter of my friend; the living image of her angel mother!' and he embraced me with a fatherly affection. Mrs. Rivers then informed me his name was Bennet, the surgeon I have before mentioned. My usual timidity vanished when I heard his name: 'Where,' said I, 'have you been lost so long? many times did my mother wish to see you, once more to repeat her thanks.' The tear of recollection stood in my eye; his rolled down his manly cheek. 'I remained in Germany,'

said he, 'till four months ago, as I found my business very beneficial there. On my return to England, I sought Mrs. Clairville with the greatest assiduity, but could learn no tidings till I had the honor of seeing Mrs. Rivers, when I learned the melancholy event I dreaded.'

"In short, not to tire you, this good man visited us constantly, and at length made a proffer of his hand to Mary, who did not want much persuading from Mrs. Rivers to accept it, and on the wedding-day presented Mary with five hundred pounds; myself not interfering, so sorry was I to part from her. During this interval, I cautiously avoided being a moment alone with Mr. Rivers. For Henry, he made a tender of his heart, which I was not coquette enough to deny, nor prude enough now to conceal, gave me pleasure; beside, he had a powerful advocate in Mrs. Rivers, though indeed he wanted none but my own heart.

"The summer was now advancing; we removed to a seat of Mr. Rivers's, in Nottinghamshire: that gentleman, great as the distance was, often visited the capital. During one of these excursions, I was walking one evening alone in a bye road that led to the village; perceiving a letter on the ground, I stooped to pick it up; it seemed to have been lately opened, and by the neatness of the folding, not rumpled by keeping, but rather slipped aside in putting in the pocket:

opened that which still held the letter :—'Here madam,' said he, 'this is perhaps the cause of her agonies.' Mrs. Rivers soon read the contents with great emotion, and then returned it to Henry; who at the conclusion exclaimed.—'My Maria was not formed for a ruffian's prey; the Protector of innocence has shown the danger, that she may escape it :—Ah Madam! we have your consent, then, Maria, give me a legal right,—a husband's right, which who shall dare violate?' Overcome with shame, I hid my face in Mrs. Rivers's bosom.—'Lift up your head, my dear girl,' said she, 'and observe me; I see no security in any other plan, but that Henry has so hastily formed; for, should you escape this snare, no doubt fresh ones will be laid, of which we may not be fortunate enough to be apprised. I know you love each other; the difference of forms, or a few months, is immaterial; and should you stay that time, I fear the consent of Mr. Rivers will be equally hard to obtain.—My advice is, that Henry and you should ride, attended only by the groom, whom you may contrive to send back on some message, then take the bye road to Mansfield, where you may procure a chaise and four; tell them to return the saddle horses the day following; make the best of your way to Scotland, as Maria wants yet four years of being of age; be married at

the first place you legally can. Myself will use every endeavour to reconcile you to Mr. Rivers; if which fails, the Almighty, who knows the uprightness of my purpose, has put it in my power to provide for you.'

"My confusion prevented an answer; for Henry, he was on his knees, returning Mrs. Rivers thanks in the highest raptures. Seeing my tears, —'Ah, madam,' said he, 'your generous proposal meets Maria's disapprobation; rather let me protect her some other way, than she become the victim of too much gratitude.' 'Why will you', returned I, 'distress me by an idle surmise, or rack my heart still more?—alas! in giving my hand I give all, so long have you possessed my heart.'

'I wish,' said Mrs. Rivers, 'Henry, you would retire for about an hour; I would pass that time with Maria alone, who must compose herself, that nothing be suspected.' He obeyed, pressing our hands first alternately to his lips.

"Now this amiable woman repeated every thing that friendship or tenderness could devise to comfort me: when she had in some degree succeeded, and my lips were uttering the language of gratitude, she stopped me.—'You have no obligation to me, but what a promise can return; make me that, and I am your debtor.' —'Ah, madam, what can you ask that I will not promise,

that I will not fulfil at the hazard of my life?' 'Then, my dear girl, though I could wish you to have no concealments from Henry, but let an ingenuous candor shine in every action; for without mutual confidence happiness is impossible; yet, in pity to him and compassion for my peace, let your suspicions of Mr. Rivers, for I know you must suspect him, be hid in silence. We have no proofs, nothing but suspicions, which, if discovered, would make an everlasting breach between the uncle and nephew: besides, if his intentions were as bad as our fears, he thinks you ignorant of them; then, my dear girl, let them remain in our own breasts. If you survive Mr. Rivers and myself, you are at liberty, and may plead for excuse a promise to me, to whom your honor is dear as my own.'

"She ceased, and I promised what she desired. After some time Henry joined us, and the evening passed with as much tranquillity as could be expected: fear, however, that my betrayers might even come before their time, for the date of the note appointed the following night, agitated me so much, that I discovered it to Mrs. Rivers:—'Fear not, my Maria,' said Henry, 'I purpose not to sleep, for my fears equal yours.' My benefactress, however, thought it best for me to pretend an inclination to read, and so dismiss my servant, and afterwards to return, and pass the night in

words nor tears, and I embraced her with agony unutterable. She now retired to her chamber, to conceal sentiments similar to my own.

"Henry, though pained at our parting, could scarcely conceal his satisfaction; which I reproved. 'Can it be otherwise?' said he; 'am I not going to be united to you by the tenderest ties, which only death can break? Can you blame my raptures? for which I almost thank the letter that brought about this blest event.'

"The servant entered to say the horses were ready.—Henry assisted me to mount. Raising my eyes, to take my farewell of the mansion, I perceived its amiable mistress at one of the windows, who, forcing a smile, and kissing her hand, looked an adieu.

"We now rode off; at the end of three miles, Henry stopped his horse, and called the groom, telling him to return, and say to Mrs. Rivers, we should ride to Sir Thomas Thornton's, as I had never seen his gardens, and probably should not return to dinner. The man obeyed, and we reached Mansfield by twelve o'clock. A chaise was immediately prepared, and we travelled the remainder of the day, all night, and the day following; in short, we arrived safe at the place of our destination, which was a small village at the entrance of Scotland. We were no sooner united, and proper certificates taken, than we

returned to Penrith; at which place my Henry determined to wait an answer to a letter he immediately wrote to Mrs. Rivers. We remained at Penrith several days; which time we spent in seeing the country. In one of these excursions, we rode over part of this moor; we were both pleased with it, and returned for three days, visiting different parts of it, a servant from the inn attending to carry cold provisions. My Henry was particularly charmed with this spot, on which we sat two days to dine. In this place, where my cottage now stands, my much-loved husband caught me in his arms: — 'Here, my love, should the world forsake us,' said he, 'part of our little fortune might build a cot, the rest support a life of rapture, which the greatest might envy! possessed of thee, Maria, I ask no more.'

"Pardon me, Louisa, I must leave off, for the present; recollection is painful, and though religion has, in some degree, made me composed under my misfortunes, yet cannot I forget past happiness:—no, my beloved husband! thy idea is never absent." Louisa's tears flowed fast as Mrs. Rivers's.—"Alas!" said she, "that I should be the occasion of your reciting woes, which make every wound time's lenient hand had almost closed, bleed afresh." "Believe me, no, my love," said Mrs. Rivers; "did not tears daily

relieve my full heart, I must long since have bid adieu to a world, which to me has been a draught of bitterness: but come, Louisa, I will not infect you with my melancholy; reach a book, and read for half an hour." She obeyed, and read Pope's Messiah, in a manner that divested her auditor of every other sentiment but the divine subject.

Mary made her appearance, bearing their evening repast, which placing on the table, would have withdrawn. "Stay," said her mistress, "take your usual seat; I will no longer suffer ceremony to deprive me of my companion; Louisa will be equally pleased with your company as myself." Louisa, whose soul was affability itself, immediately rose. "If you knew the pain you make me feel by this misplaced complaisance, I am sure you would not do it; it is I, that am so lately an intruder, that should give place." Mary could not resist her solicitations, as she by this time had placed her a chair. They now sat down to their vegetable supper, with a thankfulness and peace that I fear are not always the companions of more sumptuous entertainments; and then retired to rest, with minds so free from guile, that had they waked in eternity, neither envy, malice, nor any other discordant passion, would have prevented their everlasting welfare.

Mrs. Rivers now entered, and kindly asked the mother of her children's health; adding, "as it is a fine frosty morning, what think you of a walk, Louisa?" to the which Louisa assenting, was, after the morning occupations, executed.

Mrs. Rivers and her young friend, accompanied by Mary, directed their steps between the hills, whose high tops sheltered them from the wind. "I think," said Mrs. Rivers, "I cannot have a better opportunity than the present, to finish my melancholy story, as my spirits too are tolerably easy." Louisa bowed, and Mrs. Rivers began.

"Henry received an answer from his amiable aunt in eight days, desiring us to go to her house in Kent; at which place she would meet us. In the postscript, she added, Mr. Rivers had received the news of our marriage better than she expected.

"We set out the next day; the third night from which, we reached her seat: it was only twelve miles from London; and the morning after, I clasped my benefactress in my arms; who, after mutual congratulations, informed me, that, on my not returning the day of the pretended visit, my maid had been extremely inquisitive, had gone out, and remained a considerable time; 'and, though the whole night,' continued she, 't the least noise,

from whence I concluded she was in the secret, and went to give information of your absence, and accordingly gave her warning. Now, my dear Henry, I would have you immediately return to London, and pay your duty to Mr. Rivers; I shall remain with Maria some days, as I have already told him.'

"Henry soon after departed for town; after which, I informed Mrs. Rivers, that Henry, on our journey to Scotland, had inquired of me, if any one had ever addressed me, from whom I could suppose that letter came: I replied in the negative, that I had seen no one but in the presence of the family. She thanked me for my tenderness, as she expressed it, of her peace: 'Mr. Rivers returned,' said she, 'the third day after your elopement; he betrayed no signs of passion or anger, but was gloomy and thoughtful; which I hope will pass off, and all be well.'

"Henry returned the same evening; his account of his uncle agreed with Mrs. Rivers's; he said, on his entering the parlour, Mr. Rivers started: 'So, Sir, you imagine you have duped me?—— begone, and beware my revenge.' After some recollection, he accepted Henry's excuses, seemed more reconciled, but appeared lost in thought.

"In short, to hasten to the fatal hour that deprived me of every earthly happiness, I shall pass over ten months of bliss I passed with my

dear husband; which was often increased by the addition of Mrs. Rivers's company. Alas! how many years of sorrow have followed, what appeared to me a moment, so swiftly did it pass! I lived entirely in Kent, Mr. Rivers never desiring to see me: I carefully avoided his presence, nor once visited London in that time.

"One day, my dear Henry had been at his uncle's: he returned very melancholy; after much intreaty, he told me the cause—Mr. Rivers had received letters from India; that the person with whom my Henry's fortune was intrusted, was dead; that his executors were contending about the estate; that without his appearance to make good his claim, which Mr. Rivers would impower him to do, he must infallibly lose it.

'Ah! cannot I go?' said I.—'Impossible, my love, consider your situation:' for indeed I was far advanced with child. 'Had it not been for my uncle's imprudence,' continued he, 'in not recalling my trifling fortune, this had not happened.'—A scene followed, which a mind possessed of sensibility like yours, Louisa, can better imagine than I describe; so painful still is the remembrance, that I must pass over the remainder of my story as slightly as it will permit. Mrs. Rivers arrived from town: she had heard the news, and joined her tears with mine. Said she,—'I cannot see so violent a necessity for

Henry's going; eight thousand pounds cannot hurt Mr. Rivers's estate; but alas! he is determined, and we must obey. Raise your dejected spirits, my love; I will never leave you; Henry can trust to my care; and, should the angel of death remove me, still is Maria not destitute.'

"In short, after several interviews with Mr. Rivers, it was fixed for my loved husband to go with the first ship that sailed, which was in three weeks. The fatal hour arrived,—alas! my agonies at parting were but forebodings of what I afterwards endured. Mrs. Rivers could not sooth me; a kind of dreadful surmise continually haunted me, that we should meet no more. We parted without a word, speechless woe denying every resource but a last—last embrace.

"And now, my dear Louisa, Mary must inform you the rest; I have neither spirits to relate, nor fortitude to hear it." So saying, she walked slowly on, and Mary continued.

"Mr. Henry Rivers had not been gone long before his uncle paid my mistress a visit, and seemed much reconciled; but alas! scarcely had two months passed since my young master's departure, before his servant, the only one that attended him, returned mourning to England, with the dreadful news, that his master, in three weeks after they sailed, had caught a fever, and, after being delirious a few days, expired in his

arms; that accidentally meeting an English ship, he put himself and his master's property aboard. Mrs. Rivers was unfortunately in town at the receipt of this fatal intelligence, which being told her without caution, she was so much affected, that, after repeated faintings for two days, she was seized with convulsions. My mistress, from whom she was never long absent, became very uneasy, and determined to go to town; but those friends were destined to meet no more; for, on her unexpected arrival at Mr. Rivers's house, her Henry's servant opened the door. Amazement, for some time, deprived her of speech; but too soon was she acquainted with her misfortune, by their equivocal and unprepared answers.

This sudden shock operated so violently on my dear mistress, that her senses quite forsook her, and, by Mr. Rivers's order, she was removed to apartments in the neighbourhood; where, the next morning, in this unhappy state, she was delivered of a dead daughter; and the following evening closed the eyes of her amiable benefactress, to open no more, but on her kindred angels.

"I used generally to go to the house in Kent once a month, to see my mistress; and, as Mr. Bennet, my husband, lived in the city, I seldom saw Mrs. Rivers, except there; so was

unacquainted with this tale of sorrow, till Mr. Bennet accidentally saw Mrs. Rivers's death in the papers. With heavy hearts we went directly to the town house; there I learned the dreadful state of my mistress, and flew to see her. She had then been six days deprived of reason; and it was much feared, if even her life was spared, that her intellects were quite ruined.

"I never left her for six weeks; at the end of which she seemed to gather strength, but had no appearance of recollection or returning sense.

"Mr. Rivers sent one day for my husband; 'Mr. Bennet,' said he, 'I am extremely concerned at the state of Maria, and think it would be best to have her entirely with you. Her fortune of two thousand pounds is in the funds; I will add two thousand more; which may support you all a distance in the country.

'I have no doubt of your care of her; if you approve my proposal, I will make the money over to you for her use.' My husband, after consulting me, accepted the offer. We sold our furniture, let our shop, which, with what little we had beside, amounted to about a thousand pounds more, and retired about forty miles from town. We seldom heard of Mr. Rivers, he having insisted on giving up her fortune, with the other sum, entirely to my husband's management.

"In about six months after we had been settled in the country, Mr. Bennet began to flatter me with hopes of her returning reason; as she spoke more, and frequently wept for hours. I had the delight to find him not mistaken; for, by the time our first year in the country was expired, she was sensible as at this hour, and recollected her husband's death; but, till we acquainted her, knew nothing of Mrs. Rivers's. My husband, enraptured, wrote Mr. Rivers an account of her recovery, but received a cold complimentary letter in return; in which he said, though he should always be glad to hear of Maria's welfare, yet the great uneasiness she had occasioned compelled him to wish to see her no more.

"So well was my mistress recovered, that we scrupled not to show her the letter. 'Alas!' said she, 'I pardon his unkindness; had Henry never known me, he would still have had an heir: had he not been angry, never would he have consented to his voyage.—Fatal hour!—Mrs. Rivers lost —my infant,—all, all, gone! Only me left to bewail, fearful even to mention my wishes, lest my reason be still suspected.'—'Surely, my loved mistress,' said I, bursting into tears, 'we are not so cruel.' 'Do not cry, Mary,' returned she: 'I am not ungrateful, but I cannot respect Mr. Rivers; could I have my will, never should

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CHAPTER VIII.

LOUISA'S STORY BEGUN.

——Fear not,
Sweet Innocence! thou stranger to offence
And inward storm!—He, who you skies involves
In frowns of darkness, ever smiles on thee
With kind regard.

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

MARY concluded her narrative: her mistress's pensive step had already reached the cot; her companions lingering behind, to prevent her hearing what might give so valuable a heart an additional pang. "Well, Louisa," said she, as they approached her, "do you not think I had enough to drive me from the world to this peaceful spot?" "Really, Madam," returned she, "were I to judge of mankind by some I have lately met, your absence is much to be envied; for though but seventeen, and only six weeks quitted a convent, I have had so disgusting a taste of society, that never do I wish to mix in the great world again.—But, with your permission, I will now acquaint you with as much as I know myself of my unfortunate story.—Unfor-

tunate, well may I say; for never have I experienced a paternal blessing — never the soft soothings of a fond mother—an innocent outcast even from my cradle !——

"The first I can remember was (I suppose about the age of five) parting from an honest countrywoman who had been my nurse: the tears I shed, at parting from her, she repaid with interest; but, in spite of both, a woman, who was to have the care of me, tore me from her embraces, and put me in a chaise; in which we travelled some miles, till we reached an inn, where we stopped to dinner.—For two days we continued our journey, at the end of which time we embarked on board a vessel that took us to Calais; after stopping one day, we continued our route as far as Abbeville, where I was to be boarded in a convent.—On the day I was delivered to the care of the Abbess, in the parlour was an English girl about my own age, on the point of taking leave of a most amiable lady, who was her mother and returning to England. For me, taking me from my nurse, I regarded in so heinous a light, that brought me with so much indifference as to be noticed by the lady, whose daughter was in an agony of sorrow. 'Julia, my love,' said she, her own voice faltering, 'observe this young lady, a lovely little companion for you; she will

learn you fortitude,—she must, I am sure, have parted from affectionate friends, yet bears it with resignation.'—With these words she joined our hands. 'Indeed, Madam,' said I, 'had I a mamma to leave, I should grieve as much as Miss; but I have none, only a poor mammy, and her they have taken from me; so now they may put me where they please.'—The Countess of Melville, for that was the lady's name, immediately asked the Abbess of my family; who informed her I was an orphan, my name Louisa Villars, and dependent on the bounty of my guardian, who had paid my board eight years in advance. 'I fear she feels her dependence early,' continued she; 'but she shall not want a friend.'—The Countess applauded her, and entreated I might be Julia's companion. These ladies, I afterwards found, were old friends, being brought up together in a convent; and their ancient kindness had still subsisted, though the one had taken the veil, and the other returned to her own country, where, being married, she was mother of a son and the sweet Julia. The father of this pair, by a mistaken notion of their being spoiled at home, insisted on their being put to school. The son was accordingly sent to Eton;—the Countess rather chose, though more distant, to trust her darling with her old friend, than at a public boarding-

Countess had as many times visited her daughter: not unmindful of her promise, she honored me with a degree of fondness the more flattering; in her presents to Julia, never was I forgotten. At the end of this period, Julia returned to England for a short time to visit her father, whom she had not seen for the time before mentioned. So grieved were we at parting, that the Countess entreated I might accompany her, promising to bring us both back in a month. — 'Gladly, my dear Madam, would I grant your request', said Madame du Saint, 'but I daily expect to hear from her friends; should any of them come in her absence, how could I excuse it?' — The Countess acquiesced, and, with a promise of my friend's quick return, we parted.

"As the Abbess surmised, so it happened; for, about a week after, the person who first brought me paid us a visit. I was called to the parlour, but had not the least recollection of her again. She accosted me with, 'Well, Louisa, how do you do? your friends are not unmindful of you, I am come to pay four years more; great friendship all this, I hope you will deserve it.' I had no notion of friendship, but from lady Melville, and hastily exclaimed, 'How does my dear mamma? —and when does Julia return?' — 'Mamma, Miss!' said she, hesitating. Madame du Saint remedied my mistake, by explaining my calling

a young lady in the convent, sister; and her mother permitting me to use that liberty with her. The woman presently regained her consequence, observing, 'young ladies should not be too talkative or ask questions, but stay till their elders thought proper to satisfy them in every thing that was proper for them to know.'—'Believe me, Madam,' said I with spirit, 'had I at first recollected you, the question had been spared: were my Julia and her mother here, I should have no inquiries beyond the convent walls.' Madame du Saint gave me a look of disapprobation, and ordered me to my apartment. 'Stop, Miss,' said Mrs. Masters, for so was she called, 'beware of ingratitude; your family has suffered severely for it.'—'Indeed, Madam, you accuse me unjustly; I am extremely grateful for the happy situation I enjoy; but you must pardon me if I prefer the friends I have seen, to those who never honored me with their presence.'—'Well, Miss,' returned she, 'let it pass: what improvements have you made?' Madame du Saint informed her I spoke French and Italian perfectly well; and played on the harpsichord, and painted tolerably. Mrs. Masters looked astonished, and objected to the last articles, as increasing the expense beyond what my guardian allowed. 'Not in the least,' said the Abbess, 'we teach her ourselves; and she learns with such facility, it is a pleasure to instruct

her. I have found her the gentlest temper I ever met with, and am extremely sorry she has said any thing to give you offence.' The kindness with which the Abbess spoke forced from me what insolence could not effect; and the tears which pride had stifled found way, and rolled plenteously down my cheeks. 'If I have behaved in a manner to need an apology from a lady like Madame du Saint, I am conscious I am wrong. Pardon me, Madam,' turning to Mrs. Masters, 'the goodness of that lady, and some others, has spoiled me; but I will endeavour to learn humility.' She was pleased to unbend her brow at my submission, saying she had no doubt I would be well provided for, if I merited it. After settling her business with the Abbess, with whom she left money to clothe me, she made me happy by her departure. 'I am extremely sorry,' said Madame du Saint, 'that you should say any thing Mrs. Masters may construe into an offence; she may think you ill taught, and remove you to some other place; and, indeed, Louisa, I should be sorry to part from you.' Had she spoke for hours, she could not have done it more effectually; the idea of being parted from my real friends, painted my imprudence in the strongest light; and I promised, should she return again, to behave with the greatest humility and circumspection."

comments, Madame du Saint entered the room. 'Why, Julia,' said she, 'you have scarcely told me how you do; you were in such a hurry to see your friend, that you forgot compliments: how do you like England?' 'Really, Madam, I don't know: I saw little but our own family: papa's gout was so bad, it entirely confined mamma; and he was so cross, that, if I was cheerful, I was a hoiden a convent could not tame,—if serious, I had learned gloominess from nuns, who languished for the world they had renounced in a pet. My brother, Lord Gray, was not more fortunate; if he read, he was a bookworm,—if gay, a spendthrift,—if grave, he was considering what was the best game to lose his estate at; for he perfectly well knew that hazard and billiards were attended to at Oxford, where my brother has lately been, with more avidity than literature.' I know not how long Julia would have run on, had not Madame du Saint interrupted her gravely, with, 'You are speaking of your father, Lady Julia;—but whose picture have you there?—' My brother's, Madam,' said she, presenting it; 'he is to travel in three years; at which time, we may hope to see him: and, as I would not have Louisa a stranger to her relations, I have brought this likeness, that she may know him when they meet.'—' Your father said, with great justness, a convent had not tamed you,' replied Madame

convent, and Julia introduced me to her brother. 'Augustus,' said she, 'receive your other sister; though last, do not let her be least in your affection.' He saluted me respectfully. 'Your request is easily granted, Julia; would Miss Villars deign to favor me with her friendship, on my part it could not be secondary.' Totally unused to the conversation of men, I stammered out, 'you do me honor, my Lord,'——and remained silent. Lady Melville entered almost immediately; and, after common compliments, observed I was grave. 'I'll give you the reason, Madam,' said Julia, 'she is ashamed before my brother; I know by myself, when I was in England, and for years had seen no man but our old jolly priest who used to say mass to the nuns, I was afraid to look my father in the face; and his cross looks did not decrease my fear,' continued she, whispering her brother, too low to be heard by the Countess, who had taken my hand. 'Peace! wild girl: I wish Louisa had some of your spirits; she is too much affected at losing such a madcap: but, my dear girl,' turning to me, 'should your friends take you from the protection of Madame du Saint, as doubtless by your age they soon will, and things in England should not answer your wishes, in Lady Melville shall you find realised the tender appellation you formerly honored me with.'—Lord Gray joined us ere I could answer; he had

'Castlebrook, I rejoice to see you; Mr. Danvers, you do me honor,' replied Lord Gray:—Gentlemen, give me leave to introduce you to my sisters.' —'I have ever heard,' said Mr. Danvers, 'Lady Melville spoke of, as possessing the most extensive humanity; common report for once was true; for nothing but the general peace of mankind could have induced her to hide two such divinities so long in a cloister.' I saw the blush which warmed my cheeks at this compliment reflected on Julia's, and the timidity she laughed at in the morning, she felt in the evening.

"The gentlemen remained at Lady Melville's till the time I returned to the convent: when that lady ordered the coach to be ready to take me home, our visitors seemed extremely surprised. 'I beg pardon, Madam,' said Mr. Danvers, 'but does not this young lady return to England with you?'—'No,' said she, 'her friends wish her to remain some time longer in France.'

"I soon after wished them a good night, and returned home, attended by the Countess's woman and Lord Gray, who insisted on accompanying us to the convent gate.

"I had scarcely paid my devoirs to Madame du Saint in the morning, when the Countess's coach arrived for me; it was not too soon for my wishes; I hastily entered it, and in a quarter of an hour embraced Julia. Lady Melville was

humour myself by liking him; while, on his side, it might only be unmeaning gallantry. My brother told me this morning he thought of making the tour with him; for Mr. Danvers, he is on his return; but what think you of him, Louisa? for I am sure he thinks of you. Last night, when you returned home, he asked mamma your name and family; she informed him the first; but said, 'I have not the honor to be acquainted with the last: she is an amiable girl; and I sincerely wish she was returning to England, for Julia will leave her heart in the convent.'—'Has she been long in France?' saidDanvers.'—'Something more than eleven years: replied mamma; she was then about five; Julia and she went under the care of Madame du Saint, the same day.'—He politely thanked the Countess for her information.—Now, what think you, Louisa? has not this man some reasons for his questions?' 'I hope not,' replied I, 'there is a confidence about him that makes him disagreeable; beside, my dear girl, from by being with you, he may imagine me a girl of fortune; were he assured to the contrary, I dare say, I should not be worth a thought.'

"In fine, my dear Madam, I was at Lady Melville's every day for a fortnight; our English visitors, during that space, never omitted paying their compliments to the Countess.

"One morning, when I went as usual, I found

off her hands. For Mr. Danvers, when he knows I have no one, except your ladyship, who interest themselves about me, beyond the common wants of nature, I hope he will think me unworthy, and forget any little prepossession he may have entertained in my favor.' 'My dear girl,' returned she, 'do not distress yourself; it shall not, if you dislike it, be mentioned: I will answer Mr. Danvers as well as I can. — But I have another proposal to make you: as Mrs. Masters spoke of you as dependant on your guardian, if they approve it, I will take the trouble off their hands, and think myself much their debtor. — I shall desire the Abbess to propose it when Mrs. Masters comes, for she has no direction to them: indeed, their paying so many years board in advance, had always an air of privacy; as if they feared more frequent payments would put them to the necessity of coming over, or giving drafts, by which they might be known.' —

'Ah, Madam! half an hour since, I thought Lady Melville could not confer on me more obligations than I had already received; — but how can I thank you for this last, this generous offer?' — 'By saying nothing about it,' said she, 'but wishing Masters may come soon, and accept my proposal. I have not seen Madame du Saint to-day; I will go and talk of this matter with her.'

"Lord Gray and his friend Castlebrook came in

soon after; the first of those gentlemen appeared thoughtful. 'What is the matter, Augustus?' said Julia. 'I have an extreme pain in my head,' replied he; 'but it will pass off, heed it not.' 'Perhaps the air may remove it,' said Lord Castlebrook; 'what say you to a walk in your own garden? I think it would be of essential service to me, if the ladies will favor us with their company.' '*Allons donc*!' said Julia, 'if you promise to return quite well, we agree.' Lord Castlebrook immediately offered his hand to Julia; Lord Gray followed his example to me, and we walked into a delightful garden that joined the house.

"I remarked on giving my hand to Lord Gray, he trembled extremely. Julia and her companion walked gaily on. 'Alas! my Lord, I fear you are worse, I will call Julia back.'—'A moment, I entreat you, charming Miss Villars — pardon me — pardon my abruptness, when I beg you to inform me whether Danvers is happy enough to meet your approbation.'—'He is rather happy, my Lord,' said I, extremely confused, 'in not meeting it; the approbation of an unfortunate, like me, would be of little service to any one.'

'Thanks, amiable Louisa! I live, I breathe again; were the world Danvers's, I should not envy him, could I but obtain a small portion of that gentle affection which so apparently beams

in those heaven-illumined eyes — I then were supremely blessed.' 'Forbear, my Lord,' said I, withdrawing my hand, which as he spoke he pressed to his lips; 'you forget what is due to yourself and me; if this be the gallantry I have heard is practised in the great world, pray, bestow it where it is better understood; think not the favors of Lady Melville bestowed on one, who would encourage her son to behave in a manner unbecoming his rank and future prospects in life.' 'Cruel Louisa, why tell me of favors?—to Lady Melville — to the whole world, will I avow my unalterable affection.'

"Lady Julia had reached the end of the walk, and now appeared in sight on her return. 'Come, my Lord,' said I, 'let us haste to meet your sister.' 'Pardon me, first,' returned he, 'and do not hate me.' 'Promise to offend no more, and your pardon is granted.' 'Grant me one more request then, and I will promise any thing, and keep my word with the most religious strictness.'— 'Name it, my Lord.' 'Do not engage yourself to marry any one within this twelvemonth.'— 'I believe I may venture to make that promise without danger,' said I, smiling, 'as I shall remain in the convent that portion of time at least.'

"Lord Castlebrook and Julia now joined us, and we hastened home to dinner, as it grew near the hour."

"No sooner were we alone, than I opened my whole heart to Julia, and informed her of my fixed resolution of telling Lady Melville what had passed. 'Well,' said she, laughing, 'what can my mother say to it? She, I believe, would be as happy to see you Lady Gray, as Augustus could be to make you so; but my father is a strange mortal: so let the year of probation pass; he cannot steal you out of the convent. My mother, if she knew, out of mistaken duty, might tell my father; and the poor fellow would lead an ill life, for daring to have a choice that was not made through his spectacles.'

"We chatted best part of the night; and in the morning, after compliments to the Abbess, hasted to Lady Melville. 'Well, Louisa,' said she, 'I have given Mr. Danvers as genteel a denial as I possibly could, but I fear you will not get quit of him so easily; he regards my saying I am not acquainted with your friends, as an evasive method of excusing myself from favoring his pretensions.'

"When I am entirely in the convent, as at your Ladyship's departure I shall be, absence will cure so ill-placed a passion.' Lord Gray entering put an end to our discourse. 'I have had letters from England this morning,' said Lady Melville; 'your father, Augustus, thinks you almost at Paris; and indeed it is time you were set out.' — 'My

a mind at ease; the uncertainty of your situation —fear of finding your affections engaged at his return—all conspire to torment him; for heaven's sake, my dear girl, think of him with kindness; do not love the sister and hate the brother; divide your partiality between us.'—'Good heaven!' said I, interrupting her, 'do I hear you an advocate for disobedience and ingratitude? You own the uncertainty of my situation, yet urge me to encourage Lord Gray to act in a manner that must for ever estrange him from his parents. For shame, Julia! shake off this girlish folly; nor let the entreaties of your brother, hurried on by a youthful passion, make you forget what is due to his family and honor.'

'Unkind Louisa? what, if prevailed on by Augustus's sighs to step a little aside from duty, and plead his passion, were you his sister, and I Louisa, would you not do as much? I have seen his uneasiness some time, and teazed the cause from him, by promising to be his advocate, and to keep his secret involate; both which I will strictly perform.'"

"We passed the day together; every little absence of Lady Melville's, Julia employed in interceding for her brother; and though I would by no means promise her to think of him with tenderness, to you, my dear Madam, let every secret of my heart be discovered. I own," continued

I protest she is quite a woman.' Remembering how I displeased her, in her last visit, I accosted her with the greatest respect; which made her observe I was much improved in my manners as well as person; that it was entirely in her power to leave me in the convent three years longer, or take me back to England with her; that, as I seemed to know how to behave myself, she believed, she should do the latter. Madame du Saint mentioned the Countess's desire of having me with her; adding I should be equally her care with her own daughter.

'I do not know what answer to give,' said Mrs. Masters,' 'but will name it to the young lady's guardian; if he approve it, we can inform the lady on our return. For you, Miss Villars, prepare yourself to leave the convent to-morrow morning; as I shall call for you at that time, and indeed must return to England as soon as I can a little recover my fatigue.' A bow of obedience was all the answer in my power; but when I saw her depart, my tears found way. 'Alas!' said I, 'where is this woman going to take me? You see, Madam, there is no hope of her letting me be with Lady Melville; nay, she fears you esteem me; which makes her determined to hurry my departure. Good God! to what secret horrid place am I going? Would to heaven I could die, and escape both her and him she calls my

convent, and Julia introduced me to her brother. 'Augustus,' said she, 'receive your other sister; though last, do not let her be least in your affection.' He saluted me respectfully. 'Your request is easily granted, Julia; would Miss Villars deign to favor me with her friendship, on my part it could not be secondary.' Totally unused to the conversation of men, I stammered out, 'you do me honor, my Lord,'——and remained silent. Lady Melville entered almost immediately; and, after common compliments, observed I was grave. 'I'll give you the reason, Madam,' said Julia, 'she is ashamed before my brother; I know by myself, when I was in England, and for years had seen no man but our old jolly priest who used to say mass to the nuns, I was afraid to look my father in the face; and his cross looks did not decrease my fear,' continued she, whispering her brother, too low to be heard by the Countess, who had taken my hand. 'Peace! wild girl: I wish Louisa had some of your spirits; she is too much affected at losing such a madcap: but, my dear girl,' turning to me, 'should your friends take you from the protection of Madame du Saint, as doubtless by your age they soon will, and things in England should not answer your wishes, in Lady Melville shall you find realised the tender appellation you formerly honored me with.'—Lord Gray joined us ere I could answer; he had

been at the window with Julia, and I could only thank the Countess with a look, which, had it spoke my soul, meant respect and everlasting gratitude. 'Do you know, Madam,' said he, 'you possess a treasure without knowing it? — Miss Villar's picture.'—'It is without knowing it, indeed, Augustus, if I have it.'—'Then, Madam, when you return to West Park, look in the gallery at that inimitable picture of Hope, and if you do not allow the justice of what I advance, I will submit never to give my opinion of likenesses again.'—'Really on recollection,' said she, 'it is a strong resemblance; but now you talk of pictures, Louisa and Julia shall exchange portraits before they part: Louisa's will remind you, Julia, how well gravity sits on a young woman; and yours will, I hope, remind Louisa, that she has a sister.'

"Lady Melville took us, in the afternoon, to the house of a painter, to whom we sat, on his promising to finish the miniatures in a fortnight. As the day was fine, we all preferred walking to the use of the carriage: just as we reached home, two English gentlemen, whom the Countess knew, overtook us; and, as they expressed a desire to see Lord Gray before his departure, she entreated their company to tea. 'Augustus,' said Lady Melville, 'I bring you two welcome visitants, Lord Castlebrook and Mr. Danvers.'—

getting out of the chaise, I found myself unable to walk, and relapsed into a second fainting: my generous protector immediately ordered me to lose some blood, and to be put to bed; assuring me that he would go to Dover, and inform the lady I left there, of what had happened; and that he would then return, and bid me farewel.

"Alas! this was our final parting; never since have I seen him. Great as were my obligations, a something beyond even that endeared him to me. Perhaps my own heart, rent with painful feelings, sympathised with one whose sensibility seemed yet greater than my own." Mrs. Rivers interrupted Louisa, by asking the age of the stranger. "He appeared," replied she, "as nearly as I could judge, about the age of forty; but perhaps the pensive melancholy of his countenance had marked him with more years than he had numbered.—Methinks I could even now delineate every feature in his manly countenance, his dark expressive eyes, his bright brown locks lightly sprinkled with grey, and the indented furrows of sorrow, rather than time, on his open forehead.—Pardon me, Madam," continued she, "I am straying from my narrative; yet when you recollect from what a fate this excellent man saved me, you will excuse the overflow of a grateful heart.

"A few hours after, Mrs. Masters arrived, breathing bitter wishes against her former favo-

rite; though I sincerely believe she found his inconstancy to herself more heinous than any other fault. 'To make me,' said she, 'a convenience, a blind! sure never was any thing so provoking: had I been old or ugly, I could have pardoned it; and, fool like, I have told him your guardian's name; so I suppose we shall be plagued with him there.'

"I knew it was in vain to reproach her with imprudence, and only asked where was the generous man to whom I was so much obliged? 'Where is he!' said she: 'why, gone about his business, to be sure. I think we have had enough of male companions: I will take care no more shall be with us: he was very inquisitive, and would fain have bid you farewel; but I thanked him for his trouble, and made an excuse for seeing him any more.'

"'Merciful God! is this the way you return thanks for such obligations in this country? Would to Heaven I had remained in that peaceful spot where I passed my infant years! Short as my abode with the world has been, I have been obliged to treat the man I detested with respect, and him to whom I owe more than life, with ingratitude.'

"'Had you informed me, Miss,' returned she, 'that you had any reason to dislike Mr. Danvers, all this might have been prevented.'

being strikingly agreeable; or an extreme color, which spread over her face, and the corpulence of her shape, which took from her every appearance of delicacy, perhaps made me judge too hastily.

"She received Mr. Danvers with the freedom of an old acquaintance; and the evening, between them, passed joyously. For my part, my utter ignorance of what she termed life, though it might prevent my shining in their conversation, saved me from comprehending several witticisms inconsistent with the sense allotted to man, and derogatory to the modesty of woman; at least their loud laughs and significant looks, made me judge this was the species of wit, dignified by the name of *double entendre*. In the course of the evening, Mr. Danvers said he was obliged to return to England in a few days, and entreated permission to see us safe across the water. As Mrs. Masters did not seem to understand the language of denial, leave was soon obtained; for I was too insignificant to be consulted.

"The following day we went to Calais, and the next I trod on my native land; and, notwithstanding my long absence, and that before I had knowledge of countries, a pleasing veneration seized me on entering it; every thing gave pleasure; nor did I see a face, except my conductors, but on which, to my thoughts, I could delineate benevolence and virtue.

found secresy. Though my eyes were ready to overflow, I constrained my tears till I had a moment alone; then, throwing myself on my knees, Alas! exclaimed I, my suspicions are then verified.—Almighty Father, protect an innocent child whom a parent blushes to own! for surely that is the secret so carefully concealed. Alas! I knew I was a child of sorrow; but I am also one of shame! My unhappy mother, too, paid dear for the fatal transgression: had she been spared, we would have wandered from a censorious world, where the duty of the child that marked her fall should have brought peace and comfort to her declining years.'

"The servant of the inn informed me the chaise waited; and I immediately joined Mrs. Masters, who observed I had been weeping, and desired me to leave off those vapourish humours; 'for,' continued she, 'Lord Danford is such an enemy to melancholy, that if he only finds himself inclined to think, he immediately dissipates it by company or wine.'—'Alas!' returned I, 'the time will come, when even those will be of no avail.'—'Oh, child!' exclaimed she, interrupting me, 'a truce with your morality, I conjure you; we are all as good as we can.'

"We travelled post four days, at the end of which time we reached Danford-castle. In driving up the avenue, it is impossible to paint the

door, and examined every place very carefully; for, though I had hopes Danvers had given me up, I could not cease to fear him.

"Uneasy thoughts, ever busy when our heads press the pillow, obtruded themselves, and prevented my sleeping; always used to the profoundest tranquillity, the continual bustle and noise of an inn did not a little assist in disturbing me; and I counted the clock strike two, ere I closed my eyes. I slept perfectly sound, till the maid, by a gentle tap, informed me it was time to rise: as it was the month of November, and the morning exceeding dark, she brought a light, which as she gave to my hand, she desired me to speak low, for a lady was very sick in the next room; 'and,' continued she, 'the gentlewoman that came with you has been very angry with me for letting you sleep so long; she is dressed, and already below.'

"I made as much haste as possible, and went down to the parlour: Mr. Danvers's servant was standing at the door; 'Mrs. Masters is already in the chaise, Miss,' said he, 'and my master on horseback' (the way he travelled). I jumped into the chaise, begging pardon of Mrs. Masters, who, wrapped up in her long cloke and calash, appeared either half asleep or violently out of humour. As she made no answer to my apologies, I remained silent for near half an hour, when I was shook from my inattention by a church clock at some

distance striking five. 'Bless me, Madam,' said I, 'I thought you did not intend to set out till six; it is now only five.' She still made no answer: a kind of horror seized me.—'For God's sake, Madam, if I have offended you, pardon and speak to me.' In my energy I caught hold of her hand. 'It is impossible to keep silence, when so beautiful a pleader sues,' said the voice of Danvers; whom, to my extreme confusion, I now found to be my companion."

CHAPTER XII.

LOUISA'S STORY CONTINUED.

Perish the lover, whose imperfect flame
Forgets one feature of the nymph he lov'd.

SHENSTONE'S ELEGY.

"SURPRISE for some time took from me the power of utterance: tears at length coming to my assistance, I endeavoured, by entreaties and expostulations, to persuade him to take me back; but in vain; for he was continually calling to the postboy to quicken his pace. Finding gentle methods fail, I reproached him in the bitterest terms; nor did I spare Mrs. Masters, whom I looked upon as his confederate.—'Nay, stop there,' said he, smiling; 'I must exculpate her from any share in the business: the cloke and calash I contrived to steal; and I sincerely believe she will be as little pleased with this affair as yourself: but time, my dear girl, will, I hope, procure my pardon; and a whole life, spent in assiduity and tenderness, efface my fault, and obtain, even from that obdurate heart, a gentle return of affection.' To this I returned no answer,

"One evening, as we were sitting after supper, 'Well, Louisa,' said he, 'has that gentle heart of thine forgiven Danvers? Nay, do not blush, for Masters has told me all. Could he have applied to me honorably before I saw you, I should readily have closed with his offer; but at present, I believe, you must be arbitress of your own fate.' As he laid his hand on mine, I returned my thanks by pressing it to my lips. 'You little enchantress!' continued he, returning my compliment, 'I was determined to dislike you; how have you forced me to the opposite extreme!'

"I expressed a wish to inform Madame du Saint, and the Countess of Melville, I was happy. The Earl of Danford informed me Lord Melville was at Bath; that himself should go there in a few weeks, when I should accompany him, and agreeably surprise my friends. As I had determined his word should be law, I acquiesced; but wrote by his permision to the Abbess; yet I have never received an answer.—Thus were we situated, when the servant one day delivered Lord Danford a letter, that came by the post; on reading the superscription he turned pale, his hand trembled, and it was some time before he could open it. Whether he was sensible of this alteration in himself, I do not know; but he desired me to retire, and return in half an hour.

"'I have had a letter particularly displeasing

counterfeit swooning, as he was pleased to term it. Notwithstanding his efforts to hinder me, I redoubled my cries; and a moment after heard a voice, desiring the driver to stop, and inform him of the occasion of those screams. Danvers, letting down the window, with dreadful imprecations ordered the lad to proceed; but the person who first called was not to be moved from his purpose, as I continued begging for help and protection; and finding his request disregarded, enforced his commands to the postboy with a cocked pistol in his hand. Danvers now lost all patience, and fired at the gentleman, but fortunately missed him. It pleased Heaven, as he drew out one pistol, I saw the end of another; and, with an effort of courage more than I thought I possessed, hastily seized and threw it out of the front window, almost the same moment that Danvers fired; which increased his rage to such a degree, that I believe, at the instant, he would willingly have sacrificed me as well as my deliverer, who still held his pistol in his hand, without attempting to fire. Danvers thus baffled in his project, called hastily to his servant to bring him fire-arms; but this was fortunately prevented, by the laquey's horse taking fright at the report of the pistol, and overturning his rider in the dirt. The unworthy Danvers, being acquainted with this fresh disaster, and finding nothing was to be obtained by violence, insisted

"Our adieux were short: my Lord was to conduct me to her in three days: never did I see him so cheerful as after her departure; and the day passed with every desire of pleasure on his side, and every desire of pleasing on mine.

"The following day passed equally gladsome. Twenty times did I watch the motion of his lips, expecting him to throw off the painful mask, and own himself my father. Alas! how bitter the disappointment! When he, as usual, after dinner, reclined on the sofa, I took my place at the harpsichord. 'Do not play to day, Louisa,' said he, 'your voice possesses all the music I wish to hear; so take your seat by me, and amuse me with that, and in return I will tell you a secret.' I immediately left the instrument—my heart was on my lips, nor could I scarcely refrain throwing myself at his feet, for I was convinced the disclosure I so much wished for, was on the point of taking place. 'First, my lovely girl,' continued he, 'can you forgive the neglect you have been treated with so many years?—a neglect which nothing, not even my whole fortune, can expiate,'

"I did not give him leave to continue. 'Do not, my Lord,' said I, 'rend my heart by asking me to forgive; rather let me spend my life in erasing any ill impression you might formerly conceive of me; blessed with your approbation,

innocence, but can claim to myself no merit in your defeat; therefore, were I even well assured the event of a meeting you seem to wish would be in my favor, of this be certain, that I never will put it in my power to send so unprepared a soul into the presence of its maker.' Saying this, he assisted me in getting into the chaise; and then followed himself, peremptorily ordering the driver to take me from whence I came, and his own servant to lead his horse and follow the chaise. We then departed, leaving Danvers stamping on the ground with rage.

"I returned the stranger thanks, as well as the emotion of my spirits would permit; but he, lost in thought, his eyes fixed on my face, with features that bore strong marks of grief, made no reply. Fearing he had received some hurt in the late rencontre, I entreated to know if he was well: disturbed from this reverie, he answered, 'Perfectly so: my absence was occasioned by your extreme likeness to an angel, who for a short time blessed the earth; Heaven, who saw her possessed of a larger share of virtues than belong to the human race, snatched her to her native skies.'—As he spoke, sensibility and manhood strove for mastership; but tenderness prevailed, and a tear escaped.

"He then asked me my name and family, and to what part of England I was going: I told him,

dress. Of money I was not destitute; as in my pocket-book was Madame du Saint's note of fifty pounds, besides about ten pounds that was left of a sum Lord Danford presented me with to dress myself in the English fashion.

"For some hours I carefully avoided every house, so great were my fears of being pursued and forced back. But at length, overcome with fatigue, I resolved to enter the first cottage I met with, and inquire my way to some town, whence I might get a conveyance to London, and meet with Lady Melville.

"But, alas! I was already on the moor. In vain did I strain my sight to discern a light burning in some cot, to direct my weary steps. Several times was I on the point of sinking on the ground, overcome with fatigue, and benumbed with cold; and, when I reached this little mansion, had not your humanity received me, a short time must have reduced me to a lifeless frozen corpse."

getting out of the chaise, I found myself unable to walk, and relapsed into a second fainting: my generous protector immediately ordered me to lose some blood, and to be put to bed; assuring me that he would go to Dover, and inform the lady I left there, of what had happened; and that he would then return, and bid me farewel.

"Alas! this was our final parting; never since have I seen him. Great as were my obligations, a something beyond even that endeared him to me. Perhaps my own heart, rent with painful feelings, sympathised with one whose sensibility seemed yet greater than my own." Mrs. Rivers interrupted Louisa, by asking the age of the stranger. "He appeared," replied she, "as nearly as I could judge, about the age of forty; but perhaps the pensive melancholy of his countenance had marked him with more years than he had numbered.—Methinks I could even now delineate every feature in his manly countenance, his dark expressive eyes, his bright brown locks lightly sprinkled with grey, and the indented furrows of sorrow, rather than time, on his open forehead. —Pardon me, Madam," continued she, "I am straying from my narrative; yet when you recollect from what a fate this excellent man saved me, you will excuse the overflow of a grateful heart.

"A few hours after, Mrs. Masters arrived, breathing bitter wishes against her former favo-

"As I once offended you by pleading the cause of a lover, I promise to offend no more; the reason I will inform you of when we meet: till when, believe me impatient.

"JULIA.

"*P. S.* As you have not sent a direction to your habitation, the chaise will be at the principal inn in Kendal on the first of March."

"I am extremely pleased with your amiable friend," said Mrs. Rivers; "yet a selfish thought almost rises, to wish you was entirely my own." "And, after such a wish, my dear Madam," returned Louisa, "can I ever leave you, to whom I owe my preservation? No! Lady Melville is generous, and, when she is acquainted how happily I am situated, will not wish me pained by leaving it."

"Nor will I, for so selfish a consideration, imprison you amongst those desolate hills. Believe me, my child, this journey will be productive of good. Lady Melville's partiality will seek into the secret of your birth; which divulged, may remove the cloud that hangs on modest merit, unaccompanied by wealth. If that should be the case, I do not bid you remember me; your goodness of heart needs not that caution. I know you will sometimes think of the cottage, and the bosom that feels for you almost maternal tenderness. As I own a parent fondness, the care of character must not be wanting. Mary shall go to Kendal, and buy what is necessary to equip

"'True, Madam; but your want of confidence in me must excuse mine; as you trusted Mr. Danvers with what you did not deign to inform me, the name and family of my guardian.' Whether she saw her imprudence in its proper colors, I do not know; but she made no answer.

"The next morning we set off, but made no stay when we reached London; which made me conjecture, that her original design of staying a night there, was in compliment to her fallen favorite.

"As we advanced on our road to the north, she grew more communicative, and said, had she not foolishly told Danvers my guardian's title, who, she now informed me, was the Earl of Danford, she would not have mentioned the runaway scheme; but as, in all probability, Danvers would apply to him, it would be better the secret came from us. As she seemed more kind to me than usual, I was careful not to appear as if I thought this caution was for her own sake; but entreated her, now I was in my own country, to inform me if my parents had any relations to whom I might pay my duty. 'Your mother,' said she, 'died soon after you was born; and for relations, regard Lord Danford as the nearest you possess; but be careful not to let him think you know it; as it would be of no service to you, and ruin me for betraying the trust reposed in me.'

"I thanked her, and promised the most pro-

The morning at length arrived which was to part our friends, whom the cement of kindred minds had united in bonds so strong as to make the separation painful. After repeated embraces, they sighed their adieux; and Louisa, with slow step, and an eye often cast back, lost sight of the friendly cottage.

various agitations I felt: respect, affection, duty, fear, alternately possessed me; for I had strongly persuaded myself, from Mrs. Masters's method of speaking, Lord Danford must be my father. The sight of a long-absent daughter, thought I, will awake nature, so long dormant in his bosom; and I shall forget their painful secresy in the arms of a parent.

"Vain, flattering hope! how many painful hours dost thou smooth over with pleasing expectation!

"We reached the gate—a large bell gave notice of our approach—the door opened—I entreated the favor of Mrs. Masters's salts, by the help of which I followed her to the house; on entering which, I found she must be a person of some account, by the deference paid her by several domestics who attended. 'Where is my Lord?' said she: 'does he know I am arrived?'—'No, Madam,' replied one of the servants; 'but I will inform him of it immediately.' 'No,' said she, 'I will surprise him myself.'—So saying, she made a slight apology for leaving me, and ordered the man to show me into a parlour.

for change of air and amusement, to several of the watering-places, and lastly, to Bath; at which place we received a letter from Madame du Saint, which mentioned your removal, and her fears on your account. As I had promised Augustus to acquaint him with all the news I heard concerning you, I communicated this unwelcome intelligence; and the return of the post brought letters from him to my father, to entreat his permission to return home, like a true knight-errant, I suppose, to seek his mistress. But that very day my father had been advised to go to Spa; and, instead of the expected permission, my mother's letters desired Augustus to meet us at that place.

"Strict orders were left at the town-house, if any letters came, to forward them with all possible dispatch, as we were in continual expectation of hearing from you. Augustus joined us three days after our arrival at Spa; but so pale, so dispirited, that Lady Melville began to fear almost as much for him as my father. Lord Castlebrook came with him to Spa. You know he showed me some little attentions at Abbeville; and travelling did not seem to have made him forget his former attachment. Whether it was his kindness to my brother, or that I feared, being naturally humane, reducing him to a similar state with Augustus, I know not, but I certainly heard him with complaisance; which he interpreting to his own

"'Rise, child,' said he; the deadly pale of his countenance giving way to a burning crimson; 'you owe me no thanks; nor can I at present receive you as I could wish.'

"The Earl was a handsome man, apparently between fifty and sixty; of a commanding air, and an eye so penetrating, that when I found it fixed on me, I shrunk, as conscious of some defect. Though my confusion was great, the Earl's was equal; and three days passed, before our looks could meet, without a visible confusion on his side.

"How amiable, thought I, is the Earl's disorder, on being reminded by the innocent proof of a long-expiated fault! yet how painful to a feeling heart, to think a parent views us with repentant eyes!

"A few days wore off Lord Danford's gravity, and conquered my timidity. I studied his temper with the greatest assiduity, calling forth every little talent I possessed to amuse him. I sung to him, read to him; and, as he usually lay on the sofa an hour after dinner, he begged me to appropriate that time to the harpsichord; and I was soon convinced he regarded me not only with an eye of friendship, but affection. Happy as I thought myself to gain ground in Lord Danford's esteem, yet I felt sensibly hurt at some little familiarities that passed between him and Mrs. Masters, as it gave me room to think his conduct not so irreproachable as I at first believed.

disguise with Lady Melville; to her will I disclose all; then retire to my beloved cottage, till Lord Melville, actuated by nobler motives, shall do justice to himself and family." Louisa would have continued, but a suppressed sigh shook her voice, and almost discovered her words did violence to her inclinations.

"And so," said Julia, laughing, "to answer you methodically:—First, you are sorry my brother still loves you. Pardon me, if I disbelieve you a little.—Secondly, I promised to plead no more for him. Agreed: if so handsome a fellow as Augustus, with fourteen thousand a year, cannot plead for himself, let him go without, for Julia.—Thirdly, you will inform Lady Melville. There, my dear girl, Augustus has the advantage of you; he has told already; and the first informer has always the best of the story.—Fourthly and lastly, for myself, I think it is best you treat my brother with lenity, and become my sister, customary forms observed, as soon as convenient; as that will cut off Danvers's hopes entirely, and prevent him and Augustus quarrelling. For Lord Danford, if he dare dissent, the law shall force him to do justice."

"And were the whole world to consent—pardon my pride, Julia,"—said Louisa, "never would I give an unknown beggar to the arms of the man I esteem."

to me, Louisa,' said he, when I came back, 'as it puts me to the disagreeable necessity of parting with you for some short time: but you shall not go far distant, nor yet must your absence be long: I shall feel it too severely.—Masters shall go first, and prepare for your reception: I will conduct you to your retreat myself; it is not more than six miles; and, miser-like, I shall daily steal time to visit my treasure.'

"I asked him when it was his pleasure I should depart. 'Oh, there is no hurry,' returned he; 'we are safe for this week. I have some young fellows coming to pay me a visit; and I do not wish to endanger their peace by showing them so fascinating a creature as yourself.'

"Had the compliments I received from Lord Danford proceeded from any other person, I should have heard them with disgust; but, persuaded they came from a parent, whose growing partiality would one day own me without blushing, self-love prevailed; and the sudden transition my appearance had made in the Earl, from aversion to affection, almost made me think I deserved them.

"Mrs. Masters received the news of her journey with apparent disgust: though she did not venture to dissent from the Earl, yet her looks plainly indicated, that her words, had she given them vent, would not have been of the most pleasing sort.

me by acquainting me with her misfortunes; yet am I not at liberty to disclose either those or her name. Suffice it, to see her is to admire her, to know her is to love her, and parting from her is painful. So totally is she sequestered, that though she has reason to think a good fortune recoverable, she would rather relinquish that than mix with the world, to which she has taken so bitter a distaste."

"Every blessing attend her," returned Lord Melville; "and may she never meet an intruder who venerates her virtues less than myself!"

Our young friends chatted away the evening, till the clock struck twelve; at which time the ladies wished Lord Melville a good night.

The next morning they began their journey; Julia and Louisa in the chaise, Lord Melville on horseback, and three servants attending; but as little passed on the way, except affectionate attention on one side, and blushing on the other, we will pass over the three days which brought them safe to West Park; where Lady Melville received Louisa in a manner, which plainly evinced merit to her was more estimable than gold.

Lord Castlebrook became their visitant soon after, not at all to the dislike of Julia; whose tongue, indeed, spoke the language of unconcern; whilst her eyes, directed only by nature, sparkled with added brightness.

I remember nothing but your goodness and my own unworthiness.'

"'Sweet girl! then let me seal my pardon by pressing to my heart the only delight it has felt for many years: yes, Louisa, from your birth until within these few weeks, never have I known pleasure: it again dawns on my soul, and in your arms shall I find it realised.' So saying, he embraced me with an ardour so far from pleasing, that my heart, which the moment before had almost sprung to meet him, shrunk to her native seat, overcome with fear and confusion.

"'What is the matter, my lovely girl?' said he, seeing I trembled; 'do you repent your gentle forgiveness?'—'No, my Lord; but tell me, I beseech you, whom I should forgive? In this posture,' continued I, kneeling before him, 'let me intreat you to disclose the promised secret, and dispel the mist that overwhelms me.'

"'Whom,' said he, again pressing me to his arms, 'but your lover, whose heart, life, and fortune, are yours?'

"'Good heavens!—lover!' repeated I, faltering, and rising from my humble posture;—'What do you mean, my Lord?'

"'Mean!' returned he; 'I mean, you have too long been dependent; henceforward, mistress of my fortune, I ask but to live in your smiles, and repose on that soft bosom.' As he spoke,

"'Relationship!' repeated he; his looks becoming paler than even the pain of his wound had occasioned; What wretch told you so?—But begone, girl, and dread my revenge.' As he spoke, he threw me the key of the door; which, till that moment, I knew not was locked.

"I instantly quitted the chamber, and the moment after heard him violently ringing the bell for assistance, as I suppose, to dress the wound.

"Great as were my terrors at this moment, a fear of still greater insult determined me immediately to quit the house as privately as possible, before he had time for recollection; as he then might use means to prevent it.

"I descended by a pair of backstairs to the garden; which crossing, I reached a little door that opened to the road; then, commending myself to that Power that had hitherto protected me, I began my weary walk.

"The night was clear and frosty; the moon shone bright: all was perfectly serene, except between whiles the screams of owls, which broke on the stillness of the night and gave fresh speed to my trembling steps.

"I measured some miles before my fears gave me time to recollect, I knew not where I was wandering; and that the clothes I had on were my all. I had that day been out with Lord Danford, which occasioned my having on my riding-

CHAPTER XIV.

A LETTER.—A SEPARATION.

—Come, ye generous minds, in whose wide thought,
Of all his works, *creative Bounty* burns
With warmest beam, and, on your open front
And liberal eye, sits, from his dark retreat
Inviting modest want!

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

LOUISA ceased; and received the thanks of Mrs. Rivers. "But you cannot still suppose this wicked man to be your father?" said she. "Some fatal truth lurks under this veil of secresy: but degrade not nature so far, as to think it produces so shocking a monster. It is more probable you are really an orphan, that should possess more than he likes to part with; for what Masters said might only be to prevent questions."

"I should be entirely of your opinion," returned Louisa, "but the visible horror he underwent, at the bare mention of relationship, half confirmed the dreadful surmise." — "Dreadful indeed," replied the lady: "but banish the idea: you shall write to Lady Melville, and inform her of your misfortunes; she may assist you in making

For Lord Melville, actuated by an honorable passion, he sought not to disguise it; he viewed Louisa with admiration, and spoke of her with rapture. Nor was Lady Melville less partial; she carefully watched her son, and young friend; hoping to find mutual affection: but Louisa, more guarded than Julia, gave no reason to suppose she felt aught but esteem; except now and then a rebel sigh escaped her at any particular attention paid her by the Earl.

Thus situated were our lovers, when the Countess, being one day alone with Louisa, addressed her as follows: "I have for some time watched you with an inquiring eye, my dear Louisa: Augustus lives but in your presence; and my peace, I own, is centered in his. I have not been able to judge if you see him with the partiality I could wish: if you do, I shall be happy to embrace as my daughter her who already possesses my affection: if otherwise, though disappointed, believe me, Louisa, my friendship shall never leave you."

"My dear Madam," returned Louisa, "in what manner are you addressing a wretched girl, whose only pride is her dependence on Lady Melville! You say, the Earl's happiness depends on me—Ah! Madam, were fortune and birth mine, my heart would quickly make return; or were I only poor, your generosity would make me forget that: but to have the man I esteem beyond the whole world,

pointed at for marrying a woman who knew not her own parents—believe me, I could not support it."

"Indeed, Louisa," returned the Countess, "I did not imagine you so proud: but Lord Danford shall be obliged to own your birth. After such base behaviour, he dares not claim you; or, if he should, my interest is as great as his. Besides, you are of an age to choose another guardian; which you shall do when we remove to town. In the mean time, if you can see Augustus with partiality, happy with each other, you may smile at the world, and despise its calumny; but, in case you do not approve him, I should be sorry he should nourish a passion that would embitter his future days."

"Ah, Madam!" said Louisa, "pardon me; my heart's above my situation: did I possess worlds, I could be happy to be allied to Lady Melville; but, as it is, how must I be wounded to feel myself the only blemish in an honorable family!"

"Think of this matter at your leisure, Louisa," returned Lady Melville; "nor let an overstrained delicacy deprive you of real happiness. For the present, retire, and calm a confusion visible in your looks; nor let Augustus or Julia guess my business by your disorder.—He must be his own advocate: I only mention my wishes."

Louisa did not stay for a second permission to retire, but hastened to her chamber. "Why do

that courts you? I know you love Lord Melville. Why then make yourself voluntarily unhappy by refusing him? Why plant thorns in the bosoms of Lady Melville, and your friend Julia? I know you have a high sense of favors: Will this be a kind return for those received from this amiable family? One moment's recollection, and your scruples will vanish; and by yielding to their wishes, you will secure your own happiness.

"I have no doubt but Lady Melville will oblige your guardian to discover your family; in the knowledge of which, should any circumstance arise that may appear painful, I conjure you to dispel it: no happiness is perfect. 'Tis an offence to the Almighty to repine at what cannot be avoided: receive not his present bounty with an unthankful heart. Forgive me, my dear Louisa; I trust this caution will be unnecessary; yet I would have you fore-armed. Let what will happen, in Lady Melville you will have a mother—in me, a sympathising friend—in Lord Melville, a dearer friend than either. I speak thus candidly, as I feel your happiness is necessary towards maintaining the tranquillity with so much difficulty established in my own breast. Were you not mutually enamoured of each other, I would be the last to press you to enter a state which nothing but an union of souls can make perfectly happy. The glare of riches is deceitful; and the pleasures they bring too cloying to be lasting: the chimera soon vanishes, and leaves the mind, whose happiness was built on so transitory a foundation, to seek anew. Divest Lord Melville of fortune, he is young, sensible, handsome; and what is still superior, he is virtuous, and loves you with unbounded passion. You entertain the same sentiments for him. Thus situated, had you only enough to procure the conveniences of life between you, I should be the first to advise you to let your hand follow your heart. Banish then, my sweet girl, the giant pride; it will stride over

happiness; which, when far outstripped, will cast a wishful look, and heave a then unavailing sigh. Thus, my loved child, have I given you my sentiments freely; perhaps you may think too freely: but my heart is my pen; and the future peace of Louisa seems to be the gleam of comfort wanting to the declining hours of

"MARIA RIVERS."

Louisa read her friend's letter with delight, as much for the friendship of the writer, as for the advice, which her own heart prompted her to pursue. "Well," said she, kissing the letter, and pressing it to her bosom, "I will think this a mother's permission. Pleasing idea!—I will be Lord Melville's; and endeavour, by assiduity and tenderness, to make him forget the disproportion Heaven has placed between us. Yes, generous Augustus! I will no longer force my features to wear the cold traits of indifference, but return a passion fervent as thine; tempered alone with feminine delicacy and gratitude."

Louisa's soliloquy had probably continued some time longer, had she not seen, from her window, Lady Melville, attended by her young friends, crossing a walk at some distance from the house. Hastily putting on her hat, she determined to join them: but they were too distant to be immediately overtaken; and the walk being serpentine, made the search more difficult. For a while she walked in fruitless expectation, until, turning round a

winding of this leafy maze, she suddenly met Lord Melville alone, his eyes and thoughts deeply fixed on a little portrait, which he seemed to view with inexpressible tenderness. If this sudden meeting disconcerted Louisa, Lord Melville was scarcely less confused; but, returning the miniature to his bosom, which, indeed, appeared its common residence, he first broke silence. "This is unexpected happiness, my dear Miss Villars. My mother deprived herself and us of the pleasure of your company in our walk; as you were, she said, engaged by letters you had just received. Accompanied by Julia, she left me, to visit some of her poor pensioners. When I parted from them, I had no idea of being so greatly compensated for their absence."—"Indeed, my Lord," returned Louisa, "I did not expect to meet you alone, and am extremely sorry to break in upon your contemplation." To say the truth, the fiend jealousy, who often lies in wait to give the hearts of lovers a pang, found an avenue in that of Louisa, where he hastily entered, and shed his baneful influence. "Am I ever doomed," said Lord Melville, "my dearest Louisa, to give you sorrow in what occasions me the highest rapture! The company of my mother and sister is pleasing; but yours alone, sweet maid, would almost make me forget the deity created more than yourself."

"I fancy," returned Louisa, "gentlemen are so

accustomed to compliment, that sometimes they bestow them indiscriminately, at the trifling expense of sincerity."

"Unkind surmise!" replied he, "when you know I should think my life and fortune cheaply bestowed, to purchase you content!—A fortune, which, if you refuse to share, I will abandon. Yes, Louisa, if you hate me, England, friends, fortune, all will I leave, accompanied only by one, who, though a faint resemblance of you, will always cheer my heart with a smile."

"I have even thought the partiality with which you honored me the greatest misfortune to yourself and family, my Lord," said Louisa; "but too dearly should I pay for that partiality, by accepting a divided heart. The face that, perhaps unknowing half your virtues, can always meet you with a smile—a smile which you own can drive sorrow from your breast—what may it not effect!—Time will ripen esteem to love—and you will, I hope, be completely blessed." Louisa would have continued, but restrained sighs made utterance painful; and she endeavoured to conceal her feelings from her lover, by quitting him: but he, on whom her emotion was not lost, catching her hand, said, "You must not leave me, Louisa; I have never offered you a divided heart. I call heaven to witness, I have no happiness but what is centered in you; to behold you with rapture

when present, and to contemplate your loved image when absent: as witness, when you met me, who was my companion?"—So saying, he drew the portrait from his bosom, and presented the image of herself. "Behold, Louisa," said he, "is there not serenity and gentleness enough in this angelic face, to banish painful feelings, and make the soul all harmony? 'Tis plain to a common observer, but how much more conspicuous to me, who have hung hours on each feature with increasing rapture! From the first time I saw you, I found you so essential to my peace, that I determined to persuade the painter, to whom you sat, to execute two pictures instead of one. He obliged me: and I left Abbeville, triumphing in the stratagem by which I possessed so great a treasure: vainly hoping the time would come, when I might repeat my vows to the original that I daily offered to her shrine. Bitter disappointment!—My passion is only endured, as I am the son and brother of two much esteemed friends."

"You accuse me unjustly," replied Louisa: "I esteem Lord Melville, exclusive of the love I bear his mother and sister; and my unhappy prospects in life are more his enemy than my sentiments."—"Amiable condescension! But should I be fortunate enough to clear the ambiguity which gives you so much uneasiness, may I hope you will

share a fortune of no value to me without your acceptance? Promise, say you will not reject a man who adores you."—"I know not how to answer you, my lord," returned Louisa: "should you be successful, and my origin not bring disgrace with it, I—I"—"Nay, no conditions," interrupted Lord Melville: "on whom would you not confer honor? Banish these humiliating notions, which I am convinced you will find groundless." Julia at this moment made her appearance; perhaps never less to the satisfaction of her brother, though much to the relief of Louisa, who began to find her situation very awkward; as her tongue seemed almost to have forgotten the lessons her head had taught it, and acting as auxiliary to her heart. "Indeed, good folks," said Julia, laughing, "I think you might have had politeness enough to inform me of this assignation: I would have brought my Strephon, and made a *partie carrée*. We might have chimed in altogether so prettily, with "love and dove," and "dart and part;"—but you were so selfish to have only a duet, though you knew my enlivening strains would have been of infinite service to the concert."

"The assignation, my wild sister, as you are pleased to term it, was merely accidental," said Lord Melville: "Miss Villars came to seek you. I was fortunate enough to meet her, and intreat to be her escort."

by the hand, "I have a right to a part of her affection, as I freely give you up a third of my mother's: that return will keep up the balance."

"My dear young lady," returned Mary, "it is not to me any thanks are due, but to my amiable mistress; to her I will convey them."

In short, our little company were mutually pleased with each other; till soon after dinner, Mary reminded Louisa she must bid her farewel, as the walk was long, and the old man slow.

"I wish not to intrude, Madam," said Lord Melville; "but permit me to attend you: the chaise shall stop where you please, at some distance from your habitation, if most convenient; and Louisa will have the satisfaction of knowing you got home in safety."

Our young friends over-ruled all Mary's objections; who, after an affectionate farewel, attended by Lord Melville, reached the old man's cottage; where, after repeated thanks, he bade her adieu.

Julia was not displeased to be alone with Louisa, as she wished to be more particularly informed of what had happened since their separation; and likewise to repose in her bosom a reciprocal confidence.

"About six months ago, my dear Louisa," said she, "my father grew visibly worse, and the gout seemed to threaten his stomach: we went,

advantage, one day, in my absence, made proposals to Lord and Lady Melville, which ended in his obtaining the Earl's consent, and my being desired to receive his visits. Some days after this, what we dreaded, happened; the gout reached the Earl's stomach, and deprived me of a parent. Though Lord Melville was naturally severe, and did not make the allowance for youth and inattention which some parents can, yet was he possessed of an excellent heart, and my mother mourned him with unfeigned sorrow. In this state your letter found us; and in weeping over your troubles we half forgot our own. Though then assured of your safety, I believe Augustus painfully withheld himself from setting out post for England, which we only reached eight days since; that being as soon as Lady Melville could travel, who is now not more than a hundred and twenty miles from us, at her seat in Nottinghamshire."

"Happy and proud as I am, my dear Julia," said Louisa, "at Lady Melville's and your partiality for me, I am hurt at your suggestion that Lord Melville remembers what I had hopes was quite forgotten; nay, your own letter flattered me it was so: you said you would plead no more in his favor; which made me conjecture he had made a worthier choice, and that you had seen your former imprudence. But never will I wear a

"Well, well," returned Julia, "I know you and I shall never agree on this matter; so must leave you to wiser heads than mine."

Our young friends then changed the subject, and chatted on indifferent matters, till the return of Lord Melville. "I have done myself the pleasure, Miss Villars," said he, "to attend your friend as far as she would permit: she excused herself from accepting my company farther, saying the road was impassable for a carriage, and the old man was a sufficient safeguard; as vice sought more frequented paths than those untrodden mountains. Seeing I should oblige her by my absence, I bade her adieu. But is it possible women can assume courage enough to live alone in this unfrequented moor?"

"Very possible, my Lord," returned Louisa: "What have the virtuous to fear? Beside, the habitation is so lost between the hills, that no one but a wanderer like myself could have found it. In the two months that I have been there, never have I seen a human creature, except my two friends, and the inhabitants of the cottage where you left Mrs. Bennet: even the butcher, that supplied us with meat weekly, left it at that place. My friend, though possessed of no superfluities, has ever a hand and heart open to the unfortunate: with the happy, she has no intercourse: dead to her friends, she wishes to be so to all the world. She has honored

when present, and to contemplate your loved image when absent: as witness, when you met me, who was my companion?"—So saying, he drew the portrait from his bosom, and presented the image of herself. "Behold, Louisa," said he, "is there not serenity and gentleness enough in this angelic face, to banish painful feelings, and make the soul all harmony? 'Tis plain to a common observer, but how much more conspicuous to me, who have hung hours on each feature with increasing rapture! From the first time I saw you, I found you so essential to my peace, that I determined to persuade the painter, to whom you sat, to execute two pictures instead of one. He obliged me: and I left Abbeville, triumphing in the stratagem by which I possessed so great a treasure: vainly hoping the time would come, when I might repeat my vows to the original that I daily offered to her shrine. Bitter disappointment!—My passion is only endured, as I am the son and brother of two much esteemed friends."

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thank him, and exculpate myself from the thought of ingratitude?"

Lady Melville answered by pulling the bell, to order the servant to intreat the stranger's company; but Augustus, with action quick as Louisa's wishes, flew into the court yard, and gracefully moving his hat to the gentleman, who was on the point of departure, intreated his company a moment; as a lady, to whom he had rendered a singular service, begged to see him. The stranger instantly dismounted, and followed his conductor to the parlour where the ladies were sitting, but who instantly rose on his appearance. "I hope you will excuse the liberty we have taken to detain you, my good Sir," said Lady Melville; "but, when Louisa recognised you, we could not resist the inclination of returning our thanks."

"And I," continued Louisa, "could not bear that one to whom I was so much obliged, should think I so soon forgot the favor conferred on me, as to decline bidding him farewel."

"My dear Madam," replied the stranger, "you owe me no thanks; the little service I was fortunate enough to render you, is overpaid by seeing you in health and safety; and the prudence of your companion was perhaps laudable, as I asked questions that might truly be termed impertinent."

"The obligations conferred on me," answered Louisa, "and the situation from which you rescued

winding of this leafy maze, she suddenly met Lord Melville alone, his eyes and thoughts deeply fixed on a little portrait, which he seemed to view with inexpressible tenderness. If this sudden meeting disconcerted Louisa, Lord Melville was scarcely less confused; but, returning the miniature to his bosom, which, indeed, appeared its common residence, he first broke silence. "This is unexpected happiness, my dear Miss Villars. My mother deprived herself and us of the pleasure of your company in our walk; as you were, she said, engaged by letters you had just received. Accompanied by Julia, she left me, to visit some of her poor pensioners. When I parted from them, I had no idea of being so greatly compensated for their absence."—"Indeed, my Lord," returned Louisa, "I did not expect to meet you alone, and am extremely sorry to break in upon your contemplation." To say the truth, the fiend jealousy, who often lies in wait to give the hearts of lovers a pang, found an avenue in that of Louisa, where he hastily entered, and shed his baneful influence. "Am I ever doomed," said Lord Melville, "my dearest Louisa, to give you sorrow in what occasions me the highest rapture! The company of my mother and sister is pleasing; but yours alone, sweet maid, would almost make me forget the deity created more than yourself."

"I fancy," returned Louisa, "gentlemen are so

used, met with its reproof; for she civilly thanked me for my trouble, as she termed it—assured me the lady's habitation was far distant—her fortune affluent—and henceforward her vigilance should protect her charge from needing the assistance of strangers. After favoring me with this information, she stepped into the chaise, bidding me farewel in a manner that convinced me all efforts to learn more would be fruitless."

"On our arrival in town," said Lady Melville, "we will answer the questions she evaded: Louisa must not so soon part from a friend she has so much wished to see."

Every thing being ready for the ladies' departure, they left the inn, and arrived safe at their town residence, attended by the Lords Melville and Castlebrook, and the stranger, who informed them his name was Belmont.

The morning after their arrival, Julia and Louisa, escorted by their lovers, took a walk in the park. When Lady Melville and Mr. Belmont were alone, he genteelly reminded her of her promise of giving him some information of Louisa. "Think not, Madam," said he, "I ask out of impertinent curiosity; but when I had the happiness of rescuing her from Danvers, in her agitation she told me she was a friendless orphan. I wish to be serviceable to her; as heaven has lent me a fortune, on which every child of sorrow shall have a claim."

when present, and to contemplate your loved image when absent: as witness, when you met me, who was my companion?"—So saying, he drew the portrait from his bosom, and presented the image of herself. "Behold, Louisa," said he, "is there not serenity and gentleness enough in this angelic face, to banish painful feelings, and make the soul all harmony? 'Tis plain to a common observer, but how much more conspicuous to me, who have hung hours on each feature with increasing rapture! From the first time I saw you, I found you so essential to my peace, that I determined to persuade the painter, to whom you sat, to execute two pictures instead of one. He obliged me: and I left Abbeville, triumphing in the stratagem by which I possessed so great a treasure: vainly hoping the time would come, when I might repeat my vows to the original that I daily offered to her shrine. Bitter disappointment!—My passion is only endured, as I am the son and brother of two much esteemed friends."

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Our young friends returned home, and retired to dress. While they were thus employed, Lord Melville's servant delivered him the following:

"My Lord,

"I had the mortification, about two hours since, of seeing you in the park with Miss Villars; so lost in the happiness of your situation, that I passed unobserved. As I don't feel my affection for that lady the least diminished, I am determined to give up my pretensions only with my life.—What time and place you may think convenient, should be glad to be informed by the bearer.

"DANVERS."

The affront Louisa had received from Danvers had long rankled in Lord Melville's heart, but fearful of alarming his friends, and unwilling to leave Louisa till securely his own, he had deferred his revenge. The knowledge that Danvers was in town, and the reflection that new attempts might be made against Louisa awakened his smothered rage, and snatching up a pen, he immediately returned the following answer:

"Sir,

"Indispensable obligations kept me in the country, or before this I should have had the honor of meeting you. At six, to-morrow morning, behind Montague-house, we may settle the difference.

"MELVILLE.

"*P. S.* Lord Castlebrook will accompany me."

"And you sought me—every where but where I was to be found. We have been at home this half hour. But, à-propos—I came to tell you dinner waits. Louisa, will you never leave off that abominable habit of blushing? I am shocked to think a French education so ill bestowed; for you have imported as much *mauvaise honte*, as though you had been bred in a northern village all your life: for Heaven's sake, don't take bashfulness to London with you! I shall have you celebrated by the name of The Handsome Villager. If you will but take pattern by me, I have no doubt we shall be the *ton* next winter, and reap the inexpressible delight of giving the jaundice to every belle that dares oppose our conquests."

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"A compliment well asked, however, child," said Julia. "Pay it for me, Augustus; I am not in the humor."

The ladies then accepted each an arm of Lord Melville, and hastened home to dinner.

she inquired particularly with whom her son had fought. Lord Castlebrook assured her by Lord Melville's desire, the gentleman was quite a stranger.

Lord Melville had exerted his utmost strength, to be brought home; and he was no sooner in bed, than his wounds, from the exertion, bled afresh, and greatly alarmed even the surgeon.

For some sime he was thought in a dangerous state; during which he was attended with the greatest tenderness by the ladies. His pillow was never so smooth as when placed by Louisa—nor was the cup from her hand ever refused. His danger made her feel how much she esteemed him; and her former wishes for birth and fortune were forgot, in the dread of losing the man for whom she wished to possess them.

While things were in this state at Lord Melville's, they were yet worse with Mr. Danvers, whose wounds were attended with a fever, which gave great reason to fear the termination would be fatal. He earnestly intreated the faculty to give him their opinion candidly; which, though done in the most gentle manner, could not fail to alarm him. He immediately sent for a lawyer, to settle his affairs; after which, he desired him to write a letter himself would dictate.

TO MISS LOUISA VILLARS.

"MADAM,

"THOUGH apprised of the horror you will feel on receiving a letter from me, yet I flatter myself that passion will give way to a softer sensation, when you know the man so hated will soon expiate his follies with his life. Believe me when I say, I loved you—most honorably loved you—and, at the time I stole you from Dover, I had no intention but of being united to you by the most sacred ties, would you have consented—if not, I cannot answer what would have been the consequence. Driven to despair by your loss, I wrote to Lord Danford; whose answer was —you had withdrawn yourself from his protection, he knew not where. But of this enough:—the sole occasion of my writing, is to wish you as happy with Lord Melville as you deserve to be, and that he may be as sensible of your worth as the unhappy

"DANVERS."

P. S. "I rejoice to hear Lord Melville is better. For my death, let it not concern him; the deed was wholly mine."

The above was no sooner written than dispatched, as directed, by a trusty servant of Mr. Danvers, and delivered as she was sitting alone. "A letter for me!" said she; "'tis from my charming friend, and will bring peace with it." On casting her eye on the superscription, however, she was soon convinced it was not from

Mrs. Rivers, as that lady's hand-writing was perfectly known to her. Curiosity made her hastily tear it open; but on perusal of the contents, her senses seemed suspended, and mute astonishment took possession of her features. At length she started, exclaiming, "Well, well, good heaven! for what am I reserved! How many misfortunes am I to feel, or cause others to endure, before my hard heart will sink under the weight of its calamities! Wherever I go, I spread desolation! even my friends are involved in the destruction that surrounds me. Generous Augustus! what sorrows have I involved you in! Lady Melville—Julia—all, all must execrate me!"

As she spoke louder than usual, her last words struck the ears of Mr. Belmont, who was reading in the next room. He immediately threw down his book, and, with more friendship than politeness, rushed into the room. "What is the matter, Miss Villars?—Your voice alarmed me—Are you ill?"—"No, Sir," replied she: "I am well, too well; but, I conjure you, leave me. I respect, I honor you; that is sufficient for some of my misfortunes to reach and overwhelm you."

"You suffer your gentle spirits," returned he, "to be too much depressed: I have no doubt Lord Melville will do well."

"You do not know, perhaps," said she, "that I am the occasion of Mr. Danvers's death, and

most likely Lord Melville's; and, if so, his mother cannot survive him—that will be my return for their generous friendship."

"Mr. Danvers," replied Mr. Belmont, "is the cause of his own misfortunes—he challenged Lord Melville; who acquainted me, as soon as he was brought home, who had wounded him. I had hopes it would have escaped your knowledge, till he was recovered; so, I conjure you, bear up, my good girl, and do not protract his cure by your sorrow."

"Heaven forbid!" replied she, sighing: "all I intreat is, that you would disclose to Lady Melville the cause of my grief—tell her, I cannot, must not see her.—I have robbed her of her son, and am not to be forgiven. Give her Danvers's letter, and beg her to pity me."

"Retire to your chamber," said he, "and try to compose yourself: I will go to Lady Melville, and disclose this affair to her: 'tis better she learn it of me, than from your bursts of sorrow."

He then took her by the hand, and led her to the door of her chamber; after which, he hasted to find Lady Melville, to whom he disclosed the foregoing scene. Mr. Belmont had no occasion to exert his power of persuasion, to obtain the pity of the lady; who, though much grieved at the situation of her son, had a heart too generous to harbour rancour at the innocent occasion of the

mishap—"Sweet, grateful girl!" said she, "what has she ever seen in me, to dread my presence? Can she think me so unjust, to blame her for what she feels as sensibly as myself, and of which she is equally innocent? She must not remain in such an error—I will go and convince her she injures me by such a surmise; and that her happiness is as dear to me as my son's, who, I hope, will live to repay us both for the uneasiness this rash step of his has occasioned."

She went directly to Louisa's chamber, whom she found in a situation that really alarmed her. Her eyes were swollen with weeping: but tears had now subsided; and silent sorrow, that refused consolation, had taken their place; and every lenient gentle word Lady Melville used, could obtain no other answer, than unconnected thanks, and repetitions of her own unworthiness. The Countess intreated her to go to bed, as she had hopes rest would compose her spirits, and restore their wonted tranquillity. But those hopes were fruitless; for, after passing a sleepless night, during which she alternately laughed and weeped, the physician, in the morning, pronounced her in a high fever. To hide her illness from Lord Melville was impossible; to tell the real reason was equally so; and a cold was made the excuse for her not appearing in his chamber as usual.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN UNEXPECTED EVENT.

Friendship! mysterious cement of the soul,
Sweet'ner of life, and solder of society;
I owe thee much. Thou hast deserv'd from me
Far, far beyond what I can ever pay.

BLAIR'S GRAVE.

LOUISA's fever did not give way to the common remedies, but increased to such a height as set medicine at defiance. In this state, her wounded imagination made her again endure every misfortune she had before suffered—Again she thought herself in Danvers's power, and implored the help of Mr. Belmont—again she stabbed Lord Danford, and wept the misguided hand that spared her own bosom. At other times, more composed, she would sing in a voice so piercing, as would have found its way to the most obdurate heart.

Every thing in so unpromising a situation, Lady Melville could scarcely conceal her concern; for it seemed impossible for Louisa to recover; and if so, she had every reason to dread the loss of her son. As to Julia, her passions were not tempered like Lady Melville's; and the laughing

graces, which used to dwell in her eyes, were washed away by the tears which perpetually wet her cheeks.

Fresh excuses were every day invented to hide the real state of Louisa from Lord Melville; who, as he could not leave his bed, was forced to appear to believe what he was told; though the melancholy of Lady Melville, and the swollen eyes of Julia, filled him with most cruel apprehensions that he was deceived.

Mr. Belmont, though he ceased to hope any information he might gain from Lord Danford would be of use to Louisa, could not determine to leave so deserving a family in such a scene of distress: he therefore waited the event, with a tender feeling for their troubles, but with a resignation christian fortitude only can inspire. He saw Louisa every day—he knelt by her side—he intreated the power in whom he trusted, to spare her: for much did he esteem her. Her youth and gentleness—but, above all, her misfortunes—had won upon his native philanthropy, and forced him to hold a converse with the world he had long declined.

One day, when Lady Melville and Julia were both in Louisa's chamber, watching the event of a long sleep they almost feared would be her last, she awoke with more composure than from the beginning of her illness, and, casting her eyes

round, perfectly knew them. "My dear, best friends, how much do I trouble you!" said she—"Give me each a hand—Pardon, Lady Melville, what I am the occasion of; and inform me if Lord Melville lives."—"He does," returned she, transported to hear her speak sensibly—"he lives to reward you for your sufferings, and to bless me by your mutual happiness."—"No, my dear Madam, that is past," replied she: "I once was vain enough to hope some such thing, and that the malice of my fate was spent; but the delusion's over—I am hastening to a land where I can only know peace. That Lord Melville is better, I look to heaven with thanks—his death would have been too severe a blow:—spared from that, I can bear the rest."—"Yet more," said Julia; "Danvers will recover: so, my dear girl, do not give way to such gloomy ideas: your health restored is all we want to make us happy." "Heaven's will be done!" returned Louisa; "but, as I know my senses are very unsettled, one thing I would intreat, now I have an interval of reason is, that you would write to my friend on the moor—say to her, that I had not a wish unsatisfied, but to see her, and receive her blessing, and bid her adieu till we meet again in a better world.—But I feel myself faint, and must hasten to inform you how your letter may find her."

She then told them the usual direction to

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Mrs. Bennet; and, being much exhausted, again attempted to compose herself: which interval Lady Melville employed in writing the desired letter, which she dispatched express.

Louisa had no return of her delirium; which gave them great hopes: but so much had her former ravings exhausted her, that it was almost impossible to hear her speak.

Gold gave the courier speed, and he reached the post-house at Kendal the third day after his departure from London. He was soon directed to the old man's cottage; to the humble master of which he delivered the letter.

The old man desired the stranger to seat himself, and he would soon return with an answer; for which purpose he hurried to his benevolent mistress.—"A letter for me—and by such a conveyance!" said she—"what can it be?" and, before she perused it, cast her eye on the signature. "From Lady Melville!—Good Heaven preserve my Louisa!" She then ran over the contents with a concern true tenderness only can feel. "Well, Mary," said she, "our Louisa is, by this, perhaps, an angel.—But, on the supposition she still lives, she has expressed a wish to see me. Indeed, the desire is mutual; and, though I never thought of quitting my cottage, if you, with your usual kindness, will accompany me, I think we will venture to London. I am dear

to her—she is equally so to me—and shall I not give her the trivial satisfaction of seeing me?"

Mary, who seldom dissented from her mistress, immediately agreed; and, as mourning weeds, when worn with a heart applicable to the habit, take little arranging, our ladies were soon ready.

The messenger returned with them; and they were little more time in reaching the capital, than he had been in bringing the news.

Mrs. Rivers had been so long from the world, that she had perhaps forgot the complimentary salutations; and her first question was of Louisa. Lady Melville informed her she was still living, and to all appearance better, at which the lady expressed much pleasure, but desired Louisa might be informed of her arrival in as gentle a manner as possible. Julia joyfully undertook the task, and hastened to Louisa's chamber, who was so much better, as to sit up in bed, supported by pillows, while Mr. Belmont was paying her the usual visit. "My sweet girl," said Julia, "I have some news to relate, which must give you infinite pleasure; only promise not to be too much surprised — You have some visitors just arrived!" "Who are they?" said Louisa, faintly, "but you would prepare me for their reception. I know no one whose appearance can give me so much delight as those already here, except my friends on the moor, or Madame de Beaumont; and neither

of those will ever leave their habitations: so, my dear Julia, you need not fear to tell me; for things that are indifferent can neither overpower us with joy nor sorrow."—"But, suppose," replied Julia, "some of those wished-for friends should be here, can you receive them, without the surprise injuring your weak spirits?"—"Good Heaven!" answered she, "I intreat you, who is it: if my friend from the moor, I must sink with confusion, to have occasioned her so much trouble."

"Nay," replied Julia, "if the sight of those so beloved is painful, I shall keep it to myself."—"Not so," returned she; "if 'tis her, let me see her; she will bring me peace, health, consolation — every thing."—"If she can bring those, you *shall* see her," said Julia, and immediately went out to perform her promise.

Mr. Belmont rose to go. "Do not leave me," said she, "let me have the pleasure of seeing both my preservers at the same time." She could not add more; for the door opened, and Mrs. Rivers and Bennet, Lady Melville and Julia, entered. Mr. Belmont withdrew to the window, to give the ladies time for their first congratulations; for Louisa's surprise and pleasure took from her the power of utterance, and she could only hold out her hand to the amiable Mrs. Rivers; who, clasping her arms round her, "My dear child," said she, "how much am I rejoiced to see you better! Judge

of the pleasure I must feel, by the affection I bear you; which has occasioned me for a short time to revisit a world, to which I had bidden eternally farewel!"

Mrs. Rivers's form, though elegant and beautiful, entirely escaped the notice of Mr. Belmont; who, lost in one of his usual reveries, "had his eye fixed on vacancy:" but the voice of the lady shook him from his inattention, and an involuntary exclamation of "Merciful heaven! am I awake?" escaped him. The suddenness of the expression surprised the ladies, who unanimously turned and fixed their eyes on the person that uttered it; but no sooner had the eyes of Mrs. Rivers met those of Mr. Belmont, than she gave a loud scream, and sunk senseless by the side of Louisa. The affectionate Bennet was scarcely less alarmed; for, though she attempted to assist her mistress, her limbs refused their office, and, had it not been for the support of Julia, she must have fallen to the ground. Mr. Belmont, though the cause of the confusion, was the first that flew to the relief of Mrs. Rivers, whose situation convinced him, that what he thought delusion was real waking happiness.

"I am not mistaken," cried he; "it is, it is my Maria—my love, my wife!" As he spoke, he caught her in his arms, and embraced her with an ecstasy that recalled her fleeting senses; but

the happiness was too great for her weak spirits to bear; for 'twas indeed her Henry—her much-loved, long-lamented husband—and she could only articulate his name, before she relapsed into a state of insensibility. Lady Melville, though astonished at this scene, was the most collected, and intreated Mr. Belmont, if he valued the life of the lady, to leave her, till she had recovered her surprise. "If I value her life, Madam!" said he: "what is there on earth dear without her, my long-lost, only love!" He then, at Lady Melville's request, placed her on a sofa; though that lady was obliged to repeat her request of his leaving them a short time, which he unwillingly obeyed.

The usual remedies were some time administered without effect: at length, however, the lady gave signs of returning life: opening her eyes, she cast them round with a solicitude that spoke the emotion of her mind; but not finding the wished-for object, she exclaimed, "Tell me, I entreat you, what is become of my Henry!—or is it only my tortured imagination that presented him?—Yes, blest spirit, thou hoverest round me, impatient for the hour when my soul, freed from its bonds of clay, shall spring to meet its counterpart."

"Let me beseech you," said Lady Melville, "to be calm.—You have really seen our much-

esteemed friend Mr. Belmont."—"Mr. Belmont," repeated she: "no, surely I saw my husband, my beloved Henry—his image is engraven on my heart, and I cannot be mistaken."

"You are not deceived," said the enraptured Belmont, rushing into the room: "we are both awake—awake to such happiness, that I cannot think on what is past, so lost am I in the ecstasy of the present moment! My Maria is restored from death, and all is rapture and boundless transport."

A scene followed, which to describe would require all the pathos of the most able writer. They asked each other numberless questions, forgetting the answers amid the raptures with which their hearts overflowed; until the speechless tears of Louisa, that had perhaps prevented the surprise of such a meeting being fatal to her, waked them from their transports, to speak comfort to her they looked on as the cause of their present happiness.

CHAPTER XX.

A VISIT.

Her terrors vanish'd; and a softer train
Of mix'd emotions, hard to be describ'd,
Her sudden bosom seiz'd: shame, void of guilt,
The charming blush of innocence, esteem
And admiration of her lover's flame,
By modesty exalted: even a sense
Of self-approving beauty stole across
Her busy thought.

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

LORD Melville was soon informed, by Mr. Belmont, of this stroke of unexpected happiness, as well as of the real state of Louisa's health, whose recovery they no longer despaired of.

"To tell you, my good friend," said Lord Melville, "I rejoice at your happiness, is to say too little; perhaps I should find it hard to express myself suitably on the occasion. My heart ever owned you its friend, exclusive of the obligations I owe you on my Louisa's account. You will now seek happiness no more in foreign climes—you have it now at home — and I shall enjoy the society of a man I esteem as a brother."

Little more passed between the gentlemen; for

Belmont was impatient to return to his Maria; and Lord Melville, freed from his uncertainty, longed to try his strength in getting up, that he might be soon able to visit the fair object of his affections.

Some few days after was fixed on, by Lady Melville, for the lovers' meeting; but her son, whose spirits ill brooked the restraint long laid on them, determined, at all events, the next day, to see his Louisa. Accordingly, he dressed himself as well as his weak state would permit, and, by the help of his valet, reached the antichamber of her room. Sending for Julia, he told her, he was determined to see Louisa, but desired she she would first acquaint her with his visit, as the surprise might be of disservice to her.

Julia, laughing, re-entered the apartment, where indeed all our friends were assembled.—"A visitor, a visitor, good folks!" said she; "one Dr. Melville. Have you any opinion of his skill, Louisa? He is come to offer his best services, and only waits in the next room for permission to pay his devoirs in person."

Louisa, who was sitting on the sofa for the first time since her illness, wrapped in a large morning-gown, intreated Lady Melville to make an excuse for her. "That I should be happy to see Lord Melville, I own," said she; "but indeed I cannot see him in this situation."—"Oh, a truce with your dress," returned Julia, "physicians have

a privilege to see people in any dishabille; so, pray enter, Doctor." A second permission was not waited for, and in a moment, our lovers met. "Why have I been so cruelly deceived?" said Lord Melville; "those pallid looks import much more than I have been told."

"It would have been of little use to tell you," said Julia, "she was in extreme danger.—Only remember, Augustus, next time you are seized with an heroic fit, you may chance to wound more than your enemies."

"You are a painful flatterer, Julia," said he: "though to be of consequence to those we love, must give us delight; yet 'tis infinitely lessened, when we think we have occasioned them pain."

"Indeed, my Lord," replied Louisa, "I have severely felt your illness, particularly as I knew myself the cause; for my own, I shall always look on it as one of the happiest passages of my life, as it has occasioned the meeting of Mr. Belmont and my amiable friend."

That gentleman then presented his adored Maria to Lord Melville; and the general happiness of this little company made wounds and pain give way to cheerfulness and good humour.

"For a company of ladies, you possess very little curiosity," said Belmont.—"You see a man and wife by different names, yet don't inquire the reason."

"Had I not thought the question rude," said Lady Melville, "I should have intreated to know what calamity could have parted you so many years, and what strange fatality could have made you believe each other dead,"

"The story, my dear Madam," returned he, "is so very intricate, that as yet I cannot tell the motives for this cruel separation; but, that it must be the work of my uncle, is past all doubt. Start not, Maria—shrink not, Louisa—when I tell you that Lord Danford and Mr. Rivers are one. Nothing, my love, but your absence from the world could have prevented you hearing of it: 'tis now thirteen years since he was created Earl Danford. Bear up, Louisa," seeing her pale and trembling; "I am offended at your want of confidence. Do you think, because I partake of his blood, that I share his vices—or that, as his relation, I must be your foe? No, my dear girl, I will take on me the guardianship which his behaviour has forfeited: and the day which gives you to your worthy lover, a fortune waits your acceptance, which, though unequal to your merits, I would wish to be a memento of my gratitude."

"Spare me," returned Louisa: "you overwhelm me with kindness. I did not doubt your protection; but indeed I cannot hear Lord Danford's name without horror."

"I have equal reason to execrate

Belmont: "for nothing but his contrivance could have caused my unhappiness!—But, come, my dear Maria, tell me what has happened to you since our separation; and, in return, I will inform you how severely I have felt your loss."

Mrs. Rivers instantly obeyed; and, with a grace peculiar to herself, related what she had before told Louisa; therefore a repetition here would be needless.

"And now, my dear Henry," said she, as she concluded, "tell me every circumstance that has happened to you since our parting." Belmont received a bow of attention from the company, and immediately began.

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. BELMONT'S NARRATIVE.

Time, that wears out the trace of deepest anguish,
As the sea smooths the prints made on the sand,
Hast past o'er thee in vain.

TRAGEDY OF DOUGLAS.

"TO paint our parting, my dear Maria, would be painful to remembrance, and making too free with the feelings of our worthy friends: suffice it to say, that when the chaise I was in reached my uncle's, I was so lost in sorrow, as scarcely to bid him farewel. As for him, he bade me adieu with much seeming affection, and repeated many promises of protection to you, and the little one we expected.—'Two years,' said he, 'will be the utmost limits of your stay—Had you not married till that time, it had been better; but, as it is, depend on my friendship to the charge you leave behind." With many professions of this sort, we parted; and I set out for Portsmouth, where the ship lay, with a firm reliance on his honor, and the friendship of his amiable lady, whom I left with you. Russel, the servant I took with me, I

had ever the highest confidence in—he, you say, brought the news of my death, as likewise my baggage—He must have been the agent of the diabolical schemes that were afterwards executed. On my arrival at Portsmouth, the captain came to receive me with great civility, and intreated my company to dinner, after which we were to go on board. I then, my love, wrote to you, and delivered the letter to Russel, with orders to put it in the post, and afterwards to take my things on board. In the evening, the captain and myself joined the ship; and, the wind being fair, we immediately set sail. Towards midnight, as I had not seen Russel, I desired the captain's servant to send him to me. The man presently returned, and told me no servant of mine had come on board, nor any baggage. I was vexed to find my judgment so erroneous; for I really thought Russel the honestest fellow in the world, and was now clear he had robbed me. How could the heart of man plan such a scheme! for those things, 'tis plain, were stolen for testimonials of my death. The captain supplied all my wants in the passage; for I had nothing but what I had on. In fine, we arrived safe at Bengal:—you know, I spent many of my boyish days there;—my former acquaintances flocked to see me, and an old gentleman, a friend of my father's, insisted on my taking up my habitation with him. My trifling fortune I

recovered without trouble; and I counted the hours with impatience, till the time should arrive for my return. In the interim, a ship arrived from England. A letter was brought me—it was my uncle's hand; the seal was black.—A trembling seized me—But how was my horror increased, when I perused the contents!—As I have ever carried it in my pocket-book, you shall hear it, and judge.

'My dear Nephew.

'I know not how to speak comfort to you, when to myself it is fruitless; or advise you to bear your sorrows like a man, when I feel myself unequal to the task. A fortnight since, I lost my dear and ever-valued Mrs. Rivers. Severe as this loss is, I would our calamities ended there. —How can I write what followed!—Your gentle Maria could not bear the shock; but, after bringing into the world a dead daughter,—expired, three days after her much-loved friend. Dear to each other in life, I separated them not in death, but had them placed together in our family vault. Were I less affected myself, I should attempt to speak consolation—but 'tis impossible!—the gust of sorrow must have way—and time only can reconcile us to our loss. Might I advise you—remain some time longer in India, or make the tour of Europe: it may divert a melancholy, which an immediate return to England can only augment, and which would be fruitless to those who, by the time you receive this, must have been dead almost a year.

'Mrs. Rivers bequeathed me her estate; which, you know, was in her own power: incumbering it by bearing the name of Belmont [illegible] ist also use. I cannot

say I am fond of the change; but the fortune is too considerable to be relinquished for a name; and, as I have expectancy of a title, the alteration will not be material.

'I have nothing to add, but to conjure you to bear your misfortune with fortitude—to take the tour I advised; endeavour to regain your tranquillity, and you will be a welcome visitant to

'C. BELMONT.'

"The latter part of this letter I did not read till two months after I received it; for I no sooner reached the account of Maria's death, than, as struck with lightning, I fell senseless. My generous host had me conveyed to bed, and bled; but, in spite of all his care, I was seized with a violent fever, accompanied by so strong a delirium, that, had I not been constantly watched, I had certainly put an end to my existence. In this state I remained for six weeks; at which time the fever left me, but so emaciated with grief and sickness, that for more than two months I was unable to leave my room. I was fully determined to return to England, as soon as I should regain strength to go on board of ship; but this design was rendered abortive by my friend and host, Mr. Davis, being struck with a fever, which I sincerely believe he caught by his close attendance on me, during which he continually intreated me, by the memory of my father, not to quit him. The adjuration was too solemn to be refused, had I not been bound to him by ties

of gratitude and affection; which was really the case. It was six months before he completely regained his health; and when, at the expiration of that time, I again mentioned my voyage, he dissuaded me from it by every argument in his power. 'Your uncle wishes you,' said he, 'to recover your tranquillity before you return; which at present is so far from being the case, that you seem to have contracted a settled gloom. Will a visit to your native land remove it? No—I fear rather increase it. Believe me, I have had losses great as yours. In the early part of my life,' continued he, 'I was in the mercantile line, blessed with an amiable wife and son. When he was about fifteen, I met with some losses, so severe that bankruptcy was the consequence. To complete my misfortunes—before my affairs were settled, I lost my boy. These joint calamities were too much for my gentle partner to bear, and she sunk under the weight of her sorrows. Driven to despair, I went into the army, hoping some friendly sword would join me to those for whose sake I hated life; but the peace soon after obliged me to return to England, where I had the offer of a very lucrative place in the Indies. I immediately accepted it: nor do I ever intend to revisit my native land, till I am incapable of sorrow: —then would I wish my bones to be taken to rest with those of my wife and son. Then remain

with me,' continued he.—' Your misfortunes have endeared you to me—I will settle my affairs in India, and return with you to Europe—In France or Italy we shall find some agreeable habitation. Did I not know your temper, I would tell you, in return for such an act of friendship, I would leave you my fortune—But I will say what will have more influence: your company will sooth my declining years, and smooth my passage to the grave.'—He ceased, and the tear rolled down his furrowed cheek waiting my answer. Picture to yourself, Maria, a venerable old man, intreating me to supply the place of his son—Could I deny his grey hairs, or add another pang to his aged heart?—In short, I promised to stay with him until his affairs were settled in India, and himself fixed in some habitation in either France or Italy. It was near two years before we could leave Bengal. At length, however, we sailed in a French East-Indiaman; and, after a tedious voyage, arrived safe at Brest. My venerable friend contrived every means he could devise, to restore my tranquillity; and, when we had recovered the fatigue of our sea voyage, purposed to set out on the intended tour. I then reminded him that I had staid in India to oblige him, and hoped he would not now attempt to dissuade me from a visit to England, as I was fully determined to pay my duty at my Maria's grave; after which, I would

return, and, if he desired it, never more quit him. My friend combated my inclinations no longer; and I set off, travelling night and day, till I reached my uncle's seat in Nottinghamshire, where my Maria's remains were said to be laid. Mr. Davis's opinion I found truly verified: the sight of my native land, instead of decreasing my unhappiness, augmented it; and the gloomy melancholy which before possessed me, was overcome by boisterous, outrageous sorrow. Lord Danford, for he had then that title, was at his seat; but, totally unmindful of him, I hastened to the church-yard —the vault I well knew, and casting myself on the black marble that covered it, my actions became too frantic to be recounted, and my feelings too painful to be remembered. It was a summer morning, about the hour of three when I arrived; and my breast still pressed the earth at seven, when the sexton came to follow his usual employ; who, shaking me by the arm, asked my business there. Thus disturbed, I immediately rose, and, concealing my agitation as much as possible, walked about two miles, where I had left my servant and horses. My spirits, by this time, were something more tranquil, and I rode to my uncle's. He received me with visible emotion; which I imputed to my presence reminding him of our joint loss. During a fortnight I remained there, he scarcely ever suffered me to be alone.

My evening visits to the tomb, he could not prevent; but always took care, on pretence of tenderness, to send some one to disturb me. His servants, I observed, were all strangers; which he accounted for, by telling me he had lost a prodigious quantity of plate, and, as he could not fix the guilt on any in particular, had discharged the whole. Mrs. Bennet, he said, was gone with her husband to some part of the West-Indies, he was ignorant where, to take possession of an estate, left them some time since. I had ever thought him my friend; so could have no doubt of his sincerity. Mr. Davis wrote to me while I was in England, intreating my speedy return, and my uncle pressing it likewise, I returned to France, with a heart nothing easier for the journey. My friend received me with the affection of a father; and, soon after, we set out on our intended tour, and in four years visited most parts of Europe. I then proposed to Mr. Davis, to hire a house I had accidentally seen, on the borders of a wood, near a small village, in Languedoc. He immediately consented: the house was taken; two servants of each sex provided: and we lived in it till about eight months since; when I lost my ever-revered friend, rather through age than sickness. Finding his end approaching, he addressed me nearly as follows:—'I had hopes, my dear Henry, before I quitted this vale of mortality, to have seen

you better reconciled to your fate; but melancholy seems to have taken such root in your breast, that time cannot efface it: once more I intreat you, endeavour to dispel it. Your fortune will now be large; in the manner we live it cannot be expended. Seek out the widow and the orphan; relieve their wants; for in soothing their sorrows you will alleviate your own. Near eighty winters have passed over my head—yet have I known calamity. Grief, though it may embitter our lives, seldom destroys: so cheer your spirits, my son; and your evening of life may yet be calm and serene.' He then told me he had bequeathed me his whole fortune, which was in the English funds; and desired I would come over and administer to his will, and transfer the stock in my name;—convey his body to England, and place it by his family. My good friend died two days after this discourse. —I felt his loss as that of an affectionate parent, and was for some time unable to obey his commands, in giving the necessary orders to have him conveyed to England. At length, however, his remains, attended by two servants, were embarked. Myself, and one servant, came by the way of Calais, to prepare every thing for this last mournful duty. We immediately crossed to Dover, where we remained all night, and the next morning continued our journey on horseback. There I was happy enc e Louisa. Her melan-

choly touched me, and I could not help imagining she resembled my Maria. You know what followed. Our farewel was at the inn, from whence I went to fetch the woman that attended her; for I could not prevail to see her any more. I continued my journey to town, a small distance from which my friend was to be interred. The body did not arrive till a month after me; at which time it was deposited as he desired.

"I should not omit telling you, that, on the death of Mr. Davis, my servant wrote Lord Danford an account of what had happened, myself being ill, but had not mentioned my coming to England; and, on my arrival, as I had no wish for company, I preferred a private lodging, my uncle being out of town, to his house.

"My affairs took near a fortnight in settling, on which I found myself possessed of one hundred and fifty thousand pounds. I set off post for Nottinghamshire: there again my feelings, Maria, were awaked to agony:—the happiness I had once enjoyed in this spot, only made the present more drear. My uncle, I found, had been gone some time to Danford-castle, where I purposed to join him, as soon as I could quit the painful spot which, I thought, contained my Maria.

"I wrote to acquaint Lord Danford I would be with him in a few days, and accordingly kept my word. To my surprise, I found him confined to

his bed, from a wound in his arm, which, he informed me, he had received from a robber, about three nights before, in his own park. The wound, for a long time, was thought dangerous; in which situation I was unwilling to leave him: but, when near healed, I told him my intention of returning to France, as I found my spirits more agitated in England than in the quiet retreat I had so long been accustomed to. He appeared to approve of my return to the continent; and we parted. On the road to London, I met Lady Melville, and our young friends. I entreated to know Louisa's history. The Countess obliged me; and I found, by her recital, who was the real person that had wounded Lord Danford; and determined to use my influence with him to discover her family. For that purpose I staid.—Blessed delay! which has given me back my long-lost love!—I shall now wander no more—every place is home and heaven!"

Mr. Belmont concluded; and our little company soon after separated for the night, promising to meet early the next morning. Though Lady Melville had apprehended danger from Louisa's being so long disturbed, a few days convinced her, that the company of beloved friends is more efficacious than medicine.

consequence, yet was more collected than his lordship, and advised him to return word he would explain all on the morrow; as by that time he might form a more probable story than was possible at this juncture.

'Tis said, the devil first betrays to sin, and afterwards to punishment. This happened to be exactly the case with Mrs. Masters, who no sooner gave a little time to recollection, than she found this discovery must ruin Lord Danford, and most likely involve her in it. There was but one way to save herself; which was, to discover all she knew to Mr. Belmont. This, her prolific brain suggested, would not only procure her pardon, but reward. The lady then, as soon as she conveniently could, left her Lord to the pangs of despair, and hastened to Lady Melville's; where the servant that brought the letter had informed them Mr. Belmont was. She immediately inquired for him, and was shown into a parlour, where she was soon waited on by the gentleman, who, recollecting her exclaimed: "I am much deceived, Madam, if you are not the person who attended Miss Villars from France:—have you any business with me?"—"Yes, Sir," returned she, "but of such a nature, that I cannot disclose it without first obtaining a promise of your pardon."—"I cannot see why my pardon can be necessary," replied he; "but will venture to promise you

Louisa's: her's, I suppose, will be the most material, as the injured party."—"No, indeed," said she; "your's and that of your lady is the most essential: and I again intreat it, before I dare inform you of what must give you both anguish and delight, and will cover me with endless confusion." "Proceed then," said he, with impatience; "as far as I can promise pardon for crimes I am unacquainted with, you have mine." His manner was too peremptory to be refused, and Mrs. Masters, with some hesitation, began:—

"Eighteen years, and change of name, have made so great an alteration, that you do not recollect, in me, the servant that succeeded Mrs. Bennet, to wait on your lady, then Miss Clairville. Your uncle took particular notice of me—in short, by his promises and presents, he obtained all he wished: but I was soon informed he had only taken that method to make me more effectually his creature in his designs on my mistress, without whom he swore he could not live. Though this was by no means pleasing, yet the presents he offered were so great, that I consented to assist him all in my power. Your servant, Russel, was in the conspiracy; and, with the assistance of a person of his procuring, they were some night, after the family were gone to bed, to force Miss Clairville into a chaise, and convey her to my master. This was the

easier to be effected, as her room was in the left wing of the house, where nobody slept but ourselves and Russel. However, this scheme was frustrated by a letter, which Russel wrote to George, being lost the very day before that on which our plan was to take place: at least, we ever thought that the reason of your hasty elopement to Scotland.

"Your uncle was waiting about twenty miles from home; where he intended to meet the lady, and convey her to a place of safety. Russel, on her not returning in the evening, set out immediately to him with the news. It is impossible to describe his distraction—He vowed to pursue you both with never-ending vengeance—to make you feel tenfold the anguish you had occasioned him—and, finally, everlastingly to separate you from your bride—which he had no doubt she was by that time. Russel returned as soon as possible, to prevent suspicion. Your uncle came home, two days after, in all appearance, tolerably composed. Mrs. Rivers discharged me: but I was not much at a loss; for your uncle ordered me to go to London. On my arrival in town, I hired a lodging near his house, and took the name of Masters. The woman with whom I lodged was of most infamous character; which was not lost on Mrs. Rivers, even on his first visit. For my part I thought he was tolerably reconciled to you; but

about seven months after, hearing your lady was with child, he came to my lodging in a state little short of phrensy — 'Can Henry imagine,' said he, 'that a child of his, by Maria Clairville, shall ever inherit my fortune?— nay, more—part of it, perhaps, in my life time! for Mrs. Rivers has bequeathed them hers, should she die before me.'

"I asked him, when he was rather calmer, how he knew Mrs. Rivers's fortune was left to your lady?'—'By the information of the lawyer who made the will,' said he, 'They have fooled me once — 'tis now my turn: — they shall be disappointed, and I revenged.'

"The next day he met the attorney at my apartments; and between them it was agreed, that he should draw a will exactly like that he had drawn for Mrs. Rivers, only substituting your uncle's name throughout, instead of Maria Rivers, to whom the fortune was left, on condition of her bearing Mrs. Rivers's maiden name of Belmont.

"The will was drawn—Mrs. Rivers's signature copied—and Russel and myself made witnesses. I should not omit telling you, Russel was a constant visitor at my lodgings, and received large presents from your uncle for the news he always brought. I asked your uncle of what use the will would be, as Mrs. Rivers might outlive him.—'If she does,' returned he, 'I shall have no occasion for it — if not, I shall be safe. 'Tis

true, I once loved Maria so well, that, had it been in my power, I would have laid my whole fortune at her feet; but now, if possible, I hate her more invincibly than ever I loved her!' He then told me he had formed a plan of sending you to India—'Much may be done, in so long a separation,' said he. '.Though I have no designs on her person, by some means I will everlastingly destroy their peace: —'twill be most glorious revenge.'

"Much more passed to the same purport; and the voyage was soon after proposed to you.—Your uncle informed me, his lady used every argument in her power to dissuade him from letting you go—but in vain. You set out for Portsmouth, attended only by Russel, in whom you had an entire confidence—you know he betrayed that trust. 'Twas so contrived by your uncle. He returned immediately to London with your baggage, took private lodgings, and remained concealed near two months; at the expiration of which time he appeared, apparently in deep sorrow. You were seized, he said, after being a fortnight at sea, with a violent fever, and expired in three days—that, fortunately meeting an English vessel at the Madeiras, he thought it best to return, and bring your property home.—This being told to your uncle's lady without any caution, joined, I believe, to his reproaches for her sorrow

at the loss of her heir, as he termed him, threw that lady into convulsions, that terminated her life in about five days after she heard the news. Your wife, uneasy at not hearing from Mrs. Rivers for some days, came to town. She had not yet been acquainted with this false account; nor, indeed, had your uncle determined in what manner she should be told it. On her arrival, Russel, by chance, opened the street door. A scene of horror followed. For a moment she was motionless—then, in a voice scarcely articulate, asked a number of questions concerning you. For this they were not prepared, as she was totally unexpected; and Russel stammered out something of sickness—'I know all now,' said she, wildly, 'by your mourning dress—he is dead.' She said no more, the shock was too great, but sunk senseless on the ground."

Mr. Belmont interrupted the lady's narrative, by walking up and down the room, with a countenance so distorted between sorrow and rage, that it was impossible to say which was most predominant.

Mrs. Masters dropped on her knees—"Russel, Sir," said she, "informed me of what passed: perhaps he might exaggerate. For heaven's sake, pardon me, before I relate the rest."—"Proceed, woman," replied he, "or expect the fate your crimes merit."

"Your uncle," continued she, "was in the house when this happened, and came down at the noise. I believe he was sorry to see the state of your lady, but ordered her to be immediately put into Mrs. Rivers's chair, and conveyed to my lodgings. He came first, and desired me to keep out of sight. 'By heaven,' said he, 'my revenge is greater then I expected!—I only meant to separate—not to kill.'—Your lady was then brought, but quite senseless; so that I could remain in the room with great safety. A physician was sent for, who pronounced her in the greatest danger: in short, she passed the night in dreadful agonies, and in the morning was delivered of a daughter.—Oh! Sir, you will forgive me all I have told you, when I now inform you, that your daughter was not dead, as represented—nay, more, she still lives—that in Miss Villars you see your child!"—"Merciful heaven!" interrupted Mr. Belmont, "is it possible! or do you invent this subterfuge to avoid explaining who she really is, and to divert my just revenge from the perpetrators of such infernal actions as Lord Danford and you are guilty of?"

"No—on my life, Sir," said Mrs. Masters.—"Think on her age—compare her person—is she not exactly what Miss Clairville was, when you set out to Scotland?"

Mr. Belmont was for some minutes too much

affected to reply. At length, covering his face with his handkerchief, he ordered Mrs. Masters to continue.

"Your uncle was immediately informed of what had happened. He ordered me to convey the child to my friends in the country, and pass it for my own. The landlady was also well paid for her part of the transaction; and every body was told the infant was dead. I took it away, the night after it was born, to my relations, near forty miles from town. At my return, your uncle's lady was dead, and Mrs. Bennet was with your wife; so I could not remain in the house, as she would have known me. Mrs. Rivers's senses, I was informed, were quite lost: and your uncle, to remove her entirely from your knowledge, gave Mr. Bennet four thousand pounds, under pretence of kindness, to settle with her in the country. About a year after, Bennet wrote word she was much better; but your uncle, who wished to see her no more, answered in a manner that had the desired effect; for they removed, but he could never learn where.

"Mr. Rivers, by this means, satisfied his revenge, and enjoyed the fortune left to your lady. But he was never happy; he lived in continual apprehension of your finding out the deceit; and, had you come to live in England, his fears would have made him quit it. He even discharged all his old servants, that had the least knowledge of you

or Mrs. Rivers; took me to live in the house with him, and fixed Russel as steward to a new estate which he purchased in the North: but he did not enjoy his new employ long; he was killed by a fall from his horse in less than three months.

"Your uncle did not conceal from me the satisfaction the death of Russel gave him. 'There is the most material evidence removed,' said he; 'a fellow that would ever have kept me in dread: if I can but contrive to keep Henry abroad, I have nothing now to fear.'

"Thus time passed for some years. Your daughter Louisa, for she was christened by that name, was removed at the age of five, and placed in a convent. I took her myself to France, and paid some years in advance; as I would have no questions asked, I said she was an orphan, of the name of Villars, entirely dependent on the bounty of the gentleman who had undertaken her guardianship. As they had no direction by which they might find us, we heard nothing of her for eight years; at which time I went over, and paid four years more; at the expiration of which I said I should fetch her home.

"On my return to England, your uncle (who had for some years been Earl Danford) asked me what we were to do with her, when the time was expired.—'She's a fine girl, my Lord,' said I; 'pass her to the world for a natural daughter of

your own.'—' 'Tis not a bad thought,' returned he; 'but I dislike her unseen, so cannot come to a resolution of that kind yet.'

"During all those years, you, Sir, were but once in England, and I was kept out of the way the whole time, for fear you should recollect me.

"Four years passed over, and I mentioned to Lord Danford my promise of fetching Louisa home. With some difficulty, he consented. On my arrival at Abbeville, I became acquainted with Mr. Danvers, but had no idea of his attachment to Louisa. He came with us to England. You know his desperate intent, when yourself rescued her. So many years had passed, that I did not recollect you when you came to Dover, but answered in the manner I did, because I knew Lord Danford would never pardon my having formed an acquaintance on the road; and, another reason, I had hopes of hiding my own imprudence respecting Danvers. Lord Danford was at the castle, a seat he had lately bought. We joined him there. His aversion to Louisa was quickly changed:—'twas not lost on me;—I remonstrated —and he promised a change of conduct. One day a letter arrived from you, which informed him you would be with him in a few days. Louisa and myself were to be sent out of the way; and accordingly, next day, on pretence of getting thing[illegible] her reception, he sent me; Louisa

was to follow in two days—but from that hour I have not seen her.

"You arrived three days after, and found Lord Danford stabbed in the arm, and remained with him until the cure was near completed: which, he since has informed me, would have been much sooner, but that your presence, and the recollection of the injuries he had done you, kept him in a continual fever. I by chance saw you one day, while you were at Danford-castle, and immediately recollected you for the person that had rescued Louisa; of which I did not fail to inform your uncle. His surprise was extreme. 'Aye, Masters,' said he, 'the hand of Heaven is against us; for, though I deprived Henry of one fortune, by that loss he has found a larger: but we have gone too far to recede.' Your departure soon after, as he imagined, for France, a little calmed his spirits; and Louisa was sought with the greatest assiduity —but in vain. He heard not the smallest tidings of her, till this morning he received your note. I left him in a state not to be described. He is unacquainted with my coming, and utterly at a loss what answer to give you."

CHAPTER XXIII.

SUICIDE.

——Dreadful attempt!
Just reeking from self-slaughter, in a rage
To rush into the presence of our Judge!
As if we challeng'd him to do his worst,
And matter'd not his wrath. Unheard-of tortures
Must be reserv'd for such: these herd together;
The common damn'd shun their society,
And look upon themselves as fiends less foul!

BLAIR'S GRAVE.

Mrs. Masters ceased, and expected Mr. Belmont to speak; but that gentleman, pulling the bell, ordered a servant to tell Lord Melville he desired his company a moment. Lord Melville immediately attended him. "My Lord," said he, "by this woman I am informed of the parents of Miss Villars, but must have better authority; will you favor me with your company to Lord Danford's?"—"Willingly, Sir," returned he. "But first," said Mr. Belmont, "apologise to the ladies for our absence—the sight of Maria and Louisa, at this time, would render me incapable of the business I am going upon."—"Good heaven! what business?" said Lord Melville? "Nay, nothing that need

alarm you, on my honor; only an answer from Lord Danford. You cannot think I mean to raise my hand against the brother of my father—though he is the greatest villain that ever existed.'

Lord Melville soon made the necessary apology, and the gentlemen, with Mrs. Masters, set out immediately for Lord Danford's.

On the way, Mr. Belmont informed the young Lord what Mrs. Masters had told him concerning Louisa. He had, however, scarce time to express his astonishment, before they found themselves at Lord Danford's door; at which a servant announced them, with several loud raps, before they could find entrance. At length, a man, with horror depicted on his features, opened the door.—"Oh, Sir!—My Lord!"—said he.—"What of him?" said Mr. Belmont.

"Oh! Sir—he has shot himself." "Be merciful to him, just heaven!" said Belmont: "but, seek assistance; it may not be too late."—"Indeed, Sir, it is," replied the servant: "we heard the report of a pistol about a quarter of an hour ago; I ran up stairs directly, but his death was instantaneous: on the table was this letter;" delivering one directed to Mr. Belmont, who immediately put it in his pocket, and again ordered assistance; which however, proved abortive, as the ball had passed his brain.

The gentlemen retired into a parlour, where

Lord Melville desired Mr. Belmont, whose agitation had made him forget the letter, to have recourse to that. Mr. Belmont immediately opened it, and read the following lines:

"You will not wonder at my perpetrating an act so very heinous as suicide, when you are informed of the crimes I have already committed. This is only in Masters's power to inform you. Let her be seized: she has been my agent in the business. It only remains with me to tell you, Mrs. Rivers's fortune should have been yours at her death —that Louisa whom I attempted to seduce, is my niece and your daughter. Were it possible that what I have been guilty of could by any means be expiated, the horrors I have for years experienced might effect it—but 'tis in vain; and I rush from the present ill, certain no tortures can be worse than my own conscience.

"DANFORD."

"Unhappy man!" said Mr. Belmont; "your death and life were equally dreadful!—May Heaven be more merciful than you dared hope!"

"Shocking indeed!" said Lord Melville. "But, my dear Sir, why stay in such a scene of horror? Your lady by this time expects you: haste, then, and make her and my dear Louisa happy.—At the sight of such a wife and daughter, you will forget Lord Danford."

"Though I long," said Mr. Belmont, "to catch Louisa to my heart, and bestow on her a parent's benedic[illegible] it must be done with caution: the

news hastily told might be fatal. But let us return home; the sight of them will calm my spirits."

He now summoned a servant, with whom he left orders; nor did he forget Mrs. Masters, to whom he addressed himself as follows: "'Tis true, you deserve the severity of the law; but, in compassion, as you have disclosed the truth, and in mercy to my uncle's crimes, over which I would willingly cast a veil, you are free. I would put it in your power to repent—Call halfyearly on my agent in town; he shall supply you with a sum to keep you above want. Don't answer,"—she was about to speak—"and never let me see you more."

This business settled, our gentlemen returned home and joined the ladies, who had some time expected them. The perturbation of their minds was visible in both their faces. "My dear Henry," said Mrs. Belmont (for we must hereafter call the lady by that name), "what has disordered you? I judged you were gone to Lord Danford's, and have felt inexpressible pain. For Heaven's sake, see him no more — Who knows what deeplaid plot his evil mind may next form!"

"Fear not, Maria," returned he; "his plots, unhappy man! are over. Before we reached his house this morning, he had escaped my reproaches by sudden death—after making what atonement he could, by disclosing the truth respecting Louisa and yourself."

While Mr. Belmont spoke, his eyes involuntarily strayed between his lady and Louisa. He now could trace, to his thoughts, in the face of the latter, every feature of his Maria, and burned with impatience to make them sharers of his happiness.

Mrs. Belmont received the news of Lord Danford's death in silence—but, raising her expressive eyes to Heaven, she seemed to ask that mercy for him he neglected to intreat himself.

"Tell me, I conjure you," said Louisa, with a faltering voice, "was I allied to Lord Danford?"

"Yes," replied Belmont, summoning all his fortitude to answer the question; "your father was his near relation."

"Good Heaven! One more question, and I have done," said Louisa; her voice more inarticulate than before, and deep blushes covering her face—"Who—who—what was my mother?"

"A suffering angel—who will forget her sorrows, on the recovery of such a daughter!"

"Speak out," said Mrs. Belmont, who till this moment had been all attention—"after the strange vicissitudes that have lately happened, why should you fear our fortitude?"

"Exert it, then, Maria — A blessing awaits you;—a blessing beyond your utmost hopes!—Louisa is—your daughter!—is my child!—the dear expected one, when I went to India!"

Louisa and [illegible] mother were speechless in each

other's arms:—but, pressing them alternately to his enraptured heart, tears soon made way for words—"Am I indeed—indeed—your child!" said Louisa, clasping Mr. Belmont's knees—"Tell me so again—for fear my senses should have deceived me the first time—Is it possible that this dear honored lady is my mother!"

"Yes, my loved girl," returned he, "I repeat it—you are my child—you are the daughter of your much-esteemed friend."

"Oh, joy!—oh, happiness!"—said Louisa, sinking at Mrs. Belmont's feet—"I have a mother—and such a mother!—Bless, bless your enraptured daughter!"

Mrs. Belmont pressed her to her breast in silence. Indeed, this strange discovery had wrought so strongly on all, as to render them incapable of interference, or giving necessary assistance to those most concerned; and sobs were only audible from every person in the room.

Lord Melville, after some minutes, recollected himself so far as to leave the apartment, and send in Mrs. Bennet with drops; whom Mrs. Belmont no sooner saw, than, hastily rising, she said—"Oh! Mary, my constant, my disinterested friend, embrace my child; did you not tell me Louisa resembled me? how little did you then think you guessed so truly, or that my years of sorrow would so greatly overpaid!"

Louisa threw her arms round the affectionate Bennet, who sobbed on her bosom, unable to articulate her joy. Mrs. Belmont contemplated them with rapture, and raising her eyes and clasped hands to Heaven, exclaimed—"Great God! enable me to bear this reverse with moderation; from the depth of sorrow thou hast made the widow's heart to sing with joy, and her delighted eyes to see a child who will add to the blessings of her declining years!"

Bennet, as soon as tears would permit, congratulated all. "Yes, faithful friend of my Maria's solitary hours," said Belmont, "you shall likewise be the companion of the happy days that I hope are in store for her."

Our friendly company, after some time, grew more composed, and intreated Mr. Belmont to tell them in what manner those strange events had happened. He obeyed. The narrative recalled their attention, and prevented the perhaps too violent effects of joy.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

——Virtue sole survives,
Immortal, never-failing friend of man!—
His guide to happiness on high!

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

A FEW days after, Lord Danford was interred; and Mr. Belmont took possession of the estate, the title being extinct, as Lord Danford died childless.

Lord Castlebrook was importunate with the lovely Julia to fix a day for his happiness.—"Court Louisa," said she, laughing; "the day that makes her Lady Melville, I perhaps may be prevailed on."

"A match!" interrupted Mr. Belmont, who overheard the discourse. "What say you, Louisa? Julia consents to marry Lord Castlebrook, on the day you join your fate with Lord Melville. Do not protract it; name a speedy one."—"Now I know," answered Louisa, "my hand brings no disgrace with it, I offer it unasked; make it his when you ase, Sir."

rd Melville, enraptured, imprinted number- sses on the extended hand. "Oh, I retract,"

said Julia; "you have caught me unfairly; it was on Louisa's own consent, without the authority of Mr. Belmont, I meant."

"No authority was used," said Louisa, blushing; "I gave my hand as willingly as ever it was asked."

"Well, then—if it must be—take me, Lord Castlebrook—and Heaven give you no cause to repent!"

Mutual congratulations now passed, and mirth and pleasure triumphed in every face.

That day month the young lords received each his blooming bride from Mr. Belmont, who presented his daughter Louisa with a fortune of fifty thousand pounds, and the sum of ten thousand to Julia, which made her fortune equal with her new sister's.

These marriages were celebrated at Lady Melville's seat in the country; where after some time spent, our company took a tour to see Mr. Belmont's estates.

Nor was the cottage forgotten, but enlarged and fitted up, to receive our company of friends; Mrs. Belmont purposing to keep the anniversary of her meeting Louisa there.

Neither was Madame du Saint neglected: she was informed by letter of all that had past, with a promise of a speedy visit.

Mr. Danvers, as soon as recovered from his wds, set out on the tour of Europe: on his

return from which, he was made happy with a very amiable lady.

Louisa, now Lady Melville, by the means of Mrs. Masters, found out her old nurse, and settled a handsome annuity on her for life.

One house generally held our circle of friends, who were never so happy as when dispensing universal good.

——"The seasons thus,
As ceaseless round a jarring world they roll,
Still find them happy; and consenting Spring
Sheds her own rosy garland on their heads:
Till Evening comes at last, serene and mild;
When after the long vernal day of light,
Enamour'd more, as more remembrance swells
With many a proof of recollected love,
Together down they sink in social sleep;
Together freed, their gentle spirits fly
To scenes where love and bliss immortal reign."

THE END.

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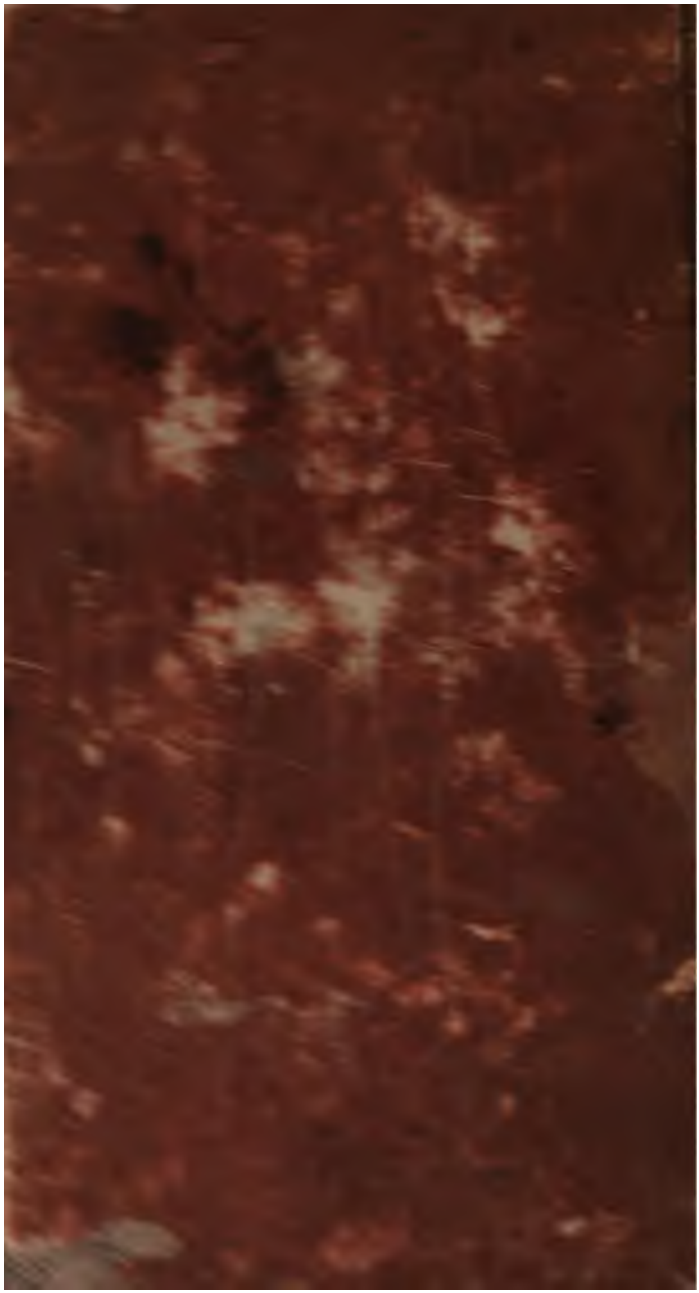
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